CASA de ESPERANZA
HOUSE OF HOPE

# MAKING ROOM FOR HOPE

2025-26 Impact Snapshot



1 The Need

3 Our Model

5 Our Impact

9 Navjot's Story

11 Our Growth

21 The Opportunity Ahead

23 The Power of Partnerships

25 Support Casa




*Our dandelions logo symbolizes hope, healing, and new beginnings.*




*Meet Opal, Casa's new emotional support cat.*

Four years ago, when I became Executive Director of Casa de Esperanza, I could not have known how deeply this organization would come to mean to me.

In 2022, I created our logo: two dandelions forming an awareness ribbon, with purple and teal representing domestic violence and sexual assault awareness. The floating seeds symbolized hope, growth, healing, and new beginnings. Like someone blowing dandelion seeds, I wished that Casa would be a place where hope could take root. Four years later, that logo means even more to me.

I have learned that hope doesn't always arrive in big, life-changing moments. Sometimes hope is answering the phone in the middle of the night. It is a safe bed when someone has nowhere else to go. It is an advocate saying, *"I believe you."* It is a therapist helping someone heal, helping a family find stability, or staying beside someone until they begin believing in themselves again.

I have also learned that we don't get to decide where the seeds land. We can provide safety, resources, advocacy, therapy, compassion, and opportunity. We can walk beside someone and remind them of their strength. But ultimately, each person determines what healing and their next chapter will look like. Our job is to help plant the possibility.

Over these four years, I have watched those seeds travel farther than I ever imagined. I see them in survivors rebuilding their lives and children learning that relationships can be safe. I see them in dedicated staff who give so much of themselves, partners who answer the call, donors who believe in our mission, and people who have decided that violence is not something we have to accept.

Casa has grown beyond what I envisioned when I first put those two dandelions together. This year, we strengthened our emergency shelter and expanded our capacity to provide long-term healing and stability. These investments help us care for survivors today and prepare for those who will need us tomorrow.




Through that growth, Casa's heart remains the same. Casa de Esperanza means House of Hope. After four years, I understand those words differently. Hope isn't something we give to people. It is something we help make room for—until they can see the possibilities for themselves.

With gratitude,
**Michelle Downing**
Executive Director
Casa de Esperanza

## THE NEED IN OUR REGION



Yuba, Sutter, and Colusa counties

**Violence, safety, and economic hardship affect individuals and families across Yuba, Sutter, and Colusa Counties.**

### Domestic violence calls

Calls for assistance per 1,000 residents[1]

| | |
|---|---|
| Yuba | 7.6 |
| Sutter | 2.0 |
| Colusa | 3.6 |
| California | 5.1 |

### Child maltreatment

Substantiated cases per 1,000 children ages 0-17[2]

| | |
|---|---|
| Yuba | 10.0 |
| Sutter | 4.1 |
| Colusa | 7.5 |
| California | 5.4 |

### Poverty

Percent of population below poverty line[3]

| | |
|---|---|
| Yuba | 13.5% |
| Sutter | 12.6% |
| Colusa | 13.6% |
| California | 11.8% |

1. California Department of Justice
2. UC Berkeley CCWIP
3. US Census 5-year estimates

# Survivors often face many interconnected challenges.

Finding safety is only the beginning. Survivors may also be navigating trauma, housing, finances, legal issues and their children's needs all at once.





**Fear and trauma**

**Children's needs**

**Mental health needs**

**Limited access to care**

**Financial hardship**

**Housing instability**

**Legal and custody issues**

# A temporary bed is not enough.

Casa brings services together to meet survivors' needs.

# OUR MODEL

## ABOUT CASA

For nearly 50 years, Casa has served as the designated domestic violence and rape crisis center for Yuba, Sutter, and Colusa counties. Dedicated to fostering a resilient and united community, Casa offers compassionate support and safe refuge to survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, child abuse, elder abuse, and human trafficking.

## MISSION

Empower individuals through crisis intervention, supportive services, comprehensive therapy services, and prevention and educational programs.

## VISION

Yuba, Sutter, and Colusa counties are free from domestic violence and assault.

## Where We Provide Support

Casa supports survivors both inside and outside the shelter.

### EMERGENCY SHELTER

Casa's emergency shelter provides a safe, confidential space where survivors and their children can receive 24/7 support and help planning their next steps.

### HOPE HAVEN COUNSELING AND SUPPORT CENTER

In 2024 Casa opened Hope Haven so people in the community could access therapy, advocacy, and help with housing and everyday needs. Hope Haven was created because not every survivor wants or needs shelter, but many still need help finding safety, rebuilding their life, or healing.



## What We Do

Casa brings together crisis response, practical support, help navigating resources and systems, and therapy to help survivors find safety, heal from trauma, and rebuild their lives.

> **With domestic violence people need a safe place to begin their life. So hope can be there.**
>
> -Survivor

### Crisis and safety

24/7 crisis response, safety planning, and emergency shelter

### Care coordination and practical support

Referrals, transportation, food, clothing, and connections to community resources

### Housing and stability

Housing navigation, transition and tenancy support

### Legal and justice advocacy

Protective-order assistance, court support, and medical and justice-system accompaniment

### Therapy and healing services

Trauma-informed individual and group counseling for adults and children

# OUR IMPACT

> **There needs to be more places like this. I accomplished more in a short amount of time than I thought was possible.**
>
> -Survivor



**1,351**

crisis hotline calls received

**723**

survivors served at Casa's shelter and Hope Haven

**118**

survivors found safety in Casa's emergency shelter

**6,358**

shelter bed nights provided

## CASA OFFERS MORE THAN A PLACE TO STAY

**$477K-$604K**

That's what 6,358 nights would cost at a low cost motel - *just for lodging.*

### The Value of a Night at Casa

Casa's emergency shelter provides much more than lodging. Survivors and their children have a safe place to stay, support available around the clock, and help working toward a stable home.

Note: Cost comparison assumes a nightly lodging rate of $139 and reflects lodging costs only.

**1,002**

hours of individual therapy provided

**463**

individuals received referrals

**112**

survivors supported through care coordination



*Sarah Higgins, Casa Care Coordinator*

**308**

survivors assisted with the criminal/civil justice system

## CARE COORDINATION IS MORE THAN A REFERRAL

Everybody's case looks a little different. I may assist with housing, healthcare, transportation, accessing benefits, employment, education, legal advocacy, and connecting somebody with community resources...I'm helping [survivors] navigate systems that are overwhelming to them.

That's what care coordination is here for, to really help individuals access those services and making sure there's no barriers on how we can support them. If it was just handing them a phone number to call, it would fall through the cracks.

-Elisandra Becerra, Casa Care Coordinator



**They were and are available to listen and truly made me feel like I matter.**

-Survivor

**Every part of [therapy] helped me thrive.**

-Survivor

**My kids love how much it feels like a community.**

-Survivor

**[It gives me] hope being able to see my clients recognize their own ability to move forward.**

-Elisandra Becerra, Casa Care Coordinator

**I feel the staff here really go out of their way to try to keep us safe and support us with resources that may empower us to thrive.**

-Survivor

**This agency enables healing and feeling safe once again so I can become my true healthy self.**

-Survivor

**Through Casa's help, [I learned] different ways and avenues to be self-reliant.**

-Survivor

# NAVJOT'S STORY

## "I started to think for myself and believe in myself."

When her husband was hurting her, Navjot called the police. They told her about Casa.

Navjot arrived with her son, needing a safe place to stay. Casa provided shelter, clothing, food, diapers, wipes and bottles.

"I came with nothing," Navjot recalls. "They supplied me with everything I needed...They communicated with me wonderfully, and they understood my feelings. I felt very safe there."

**“I came with nothing. They supplied me with everything I needed.”**

After her immediate needs were met, Navjot began taking steps toward living independently with the support of her care coordinator, Sarah. Sarah helped her access Medi-Cal, CalFresh and CalWORKS, get her driver's license, find housing, and obtain a restraining order.

Over time, Navjot began to see herself differently. "I started to think for myself and believe in myself. Casa showed me the right direction for living my own life...I learned I am worthy."

Navjot is most proud of her growing independence: "I have my own home, my own money, and I can take care of my son on my own. I am very proud of that!"

Her son also received support at Casa. Sarah helped connect them with a specialist for his speech delays and enroll in Head Start. "My child has learned a great deal while staying at Casa. He has learned to communicate...[is] making friends, and he is talking much better!"

Navjot is now taking English classes so she can gain stable employment. Her goal is to someday buy a car and a home. Looking back, she recalls, "Casa helped me when I needed the most support. I had nowhere to go, no money, and I was so scared. Casa made me feel safe, and they gave me all the tools to stand on my own!"





**“I have my own home, my own money, and I can take care of my son on my own. I am very proud of that!**




*Director of Clinical Services Meredith Evans emcees Blue Shift of Yuba-Sutter's annual Maternal Mental Health Conference.*




*Casa connects with families at the Sutter County Children and Families Commission's Baby Shower.*




*Casa shares resources at the Yuba-Sutter-Colusa United Way Resource Fair.*



# A YEAR OF GROWTH AT CASA

**Casa is helping more people find support and increasing its capacity to meet their needs.**

**Reaching more people:** We've increased our outreach efforts so more people know where to find help.

**Strengthening the team and partnerships:** We brought in new leadership, and continued to build our expertise and partnerships to better meet the needs of survivors.

**Building a stronger system of care:** We launched Connected Beginnings with Sutter County Children and Families Commission (SCCFC) to expand behavioral health support for children and families.

**Investing in safer spaces:** We've improved shelter safety and accessibility, and renovated to accommodate more survivors.



*Executive Director Michelle Downing presents at the Sutter Yuba Homeless Consortium's State of Homelessness Summit.*

WE'RE RAISING
AWARENESS SO MORE

# PEOPLE FIND CASA

**67** presentations delivered reaching **3,058** community members and professionals

**4x** more people reached than last year

This year Casa staff delivered nearly twice as many presentations as last year, reaching four times as many people. Presentations helped community members, youth, professionals and providers recognize abuse, learn about healthy relationships, and understand what Casa provides. Outreach also helped clarify that Casa serves people of all genders and survivors seeking support long after abuse occurred. As a result, Casa has seen an uptick in referrals for services, requests for trainings, and stronger relationships with community partners.

> **They know who we are and what our goal is.**
>
> -Elisandra Becerra,
> Casa Care Coordinator

WE'RE EXPANDING

# CASA'S CAPACITY TO RESPOND

**This year Casa strengthened its team with new leadership and specialized expertise, built new partnerships, and brought care into more settings.**



**A stronger clinical team to support survivors and families**

Casa's clinical services and partnerships have grown with Clinical Director, Meredith Evans, LMFT, at the helm for the past year. Meredith supervises a growing team of associate therapists and social workers, helping them put evidence-based, trauma-informed approaches into practice. The team participated in play therapy and sand tray therapy trainings and Postpartum Support International (PSI) certification, expanding Casa's capacity to serve very young children and provide mental health support during pregnancy and postpartum.

This year Meredith has also developed clinical policies and procedures, and helped bring new partnerships into practice including Connected Beginnings and a therapist embedded in the Yuba Probation Department.



**New leadership to support survivors of sexual assault and trafficking**

Casa welcomed Tamara Pecsi as Justice and Community Response Manager, a new leadership role dedicated to supporting survivors of sexual assault, commercial sexual exploitation, and sex trafficking. In her role, Tamara connects survivors with advocacy and resources, and works with partner agencies to close gaps in support. She brings more than 25 years of public service and leadership experience.





**On-site therapy for youth in the justice system**

Casa partnered with Yuba County Youth Probation to embed a therapist on-site who provides individual, family and group therapy, offers education about topics such as healthy relationships, and supports youth in obtaining employment and housing. The goal of this preventative approach is to help youth build stability and make healthier choices in order to reduce the likelihood of returning to the justice system.

**Comfort at Hope Haven from Opal, the emotional support cat**

Opal joined Hope Haven as the resident emotional support cat. She brings companionship and comfort and offers survivors a little relief during a difficult time.



WE’RE WORKING
TOGETHER TO BUILD A

# STRONGER SYSTEM OF CARE

> **Every accomplishment over the past year reflects the dedication of an amazing team and the strength of our community partnerships. Together, we're expanding access to healing-centered services and helping individuals and families build brighter futures.**
>
> -Meredith Evans, Casa Clinical Director

## Through Connected Beginnings, Casa and partners are working together to strengthen behavioral health care for children and families.

Casa, in partnership with Sutter County Children and Families Commission (SCCFC), was awarded a competitive $2 million grant to address maternal and early child behavioral health. The grant supports Connected Beginnings, a three-year initiative to improve behavioral health outcomes for pregnant people and families with young children. The initiative aims to reduce out-of-home placements, prepare children for kindergarten, identify developmental needs early, and strengthen a system of care. Through Connected Beginnings, Casa provides developmental screenings, individual and family therapy, and parenting classes. Casa and its community partners are also creating more coordinated pathways into care so families can connect with the support they need through multiple entry points.

WE'RE MAKING

# MORE SPACE FOR SHELTER

## $650k+

**invested in Casa's emergency shelter to make it more safe, accessible, private, and spacious in order to serve more survivors and their children.**

**Stronger security:** New security fencing protects survivors' privacy and creates a safer place for children and families to spend time outdoors.

**Expanded emergency shelter capacity:** Four individual rooms were added with space for 8-12 additional beds giving more survivors and families a safe place to stay.

**Greater accessibility:** A new ADA-accessible ramp and improved parking, walkways and entrances make the shelter easier and safer to navigate.

**Improvements were made possible through the following partnerships:**

- $132,575 — Sutter Medical Foundation
- $100,000 — Housing and Homelessness Incentive Program (HHIP) through Anthem Blue Cross and Health Net/California Health and Wellness
- $60,000 — City of Yuba City Community Development Block Grant (CDBG)
- $158,000 — Homeless Housing, Assistance and Prevention (HHAP) funding
- Additional investment by Casa

# THE OPPORTUNITY AHEAD

## 1 Expand and improve emergency shelter

Continue investing in Casa's shelter campus, including completion of the East Wing expansion, which will add private and more accessible sleeping spaces and increase shelter capacity. Continue the East Wing expansion and rehabilitate the West Wing, including rooms planned for medical respite. Improve the shelter backyard as a safe place for children to play and families to gather.

## 2 Strengthen sexual assault response

Build a stronger, coordinated local response for survivors of sexual assault through expanded advocacy, improved hospital and law-enforcement coordination, strengthened multidisciplinary partnerships, transportation and accompaniment, and continued development of a sustainable Sexual Assault Response Team model.

## 3 Expand mental health and trauma recovery services

Continue growing Hope Haven Counseling and Support Center and access to trauma-informed behavioral health services for survivors, children, and families. This includes strengthening clinical capacity, specialized trauma treatment, individual and group services, and partnerships that reduce barriers to care.

## 4 Invest in children, parents and early intervention

Through Connected Beginnings, continue building a coordinated system of behavioral health and family support for pregnant individuals, parents, caregivers, and children from birth through age five. The $2 million initiative continues through 2028 and focuses on early identification, mental health, parenting support, developmental resources, and stronger connections between families and community services.

## 5 Create pathways from crisis to housing stability

Continue expanding Casa's housing-focused services, care coordination, CalAIM Enhanced Care Management, and Community Supports so individuals can move beyond immediate crisis toward safe housing, improved health, stability, and greater independence. Explore longer-term housing and a café that could offer job skills and employment opportunities.



## 6 Grow prevention and youth education

Increase Casa's presence in schools and throughout the community through prevention education, healthy-relationship programming, teen dating violence education, community presentations, awareness campaigns, and earlier intervention with youth and families.

## 7 Develop the people who carry the mission forward

Invest in staff development, specialized training, leadership development, clinical expertise, and organizational infrastructure to ensure Casa has the capacity and leadership needed to sustain and grow its mission.

## BUILDING FOR THE NEXT 50 YEARS

Casa’s future is about more than expanding programs. It is about creating a stronger continuum of support—from prevention and early intervention to crisis response, shelter, advocacy, healing, housing, and long-term stability.

As we prepare to celebrate 50 years of service in 2027, we remain committed to evolving alongside our community while ensuring that survivors and families continue to have a place to turn for safety, hope, and support.

# THE POWER OF
# PARTNERSHIPS

Casa's  work is made possible through the generous support, collaboration, and partnership of public agencies, foundations, community organizations, businesses, and individuals who share our commitment to supporting survivors and strengthening our community.

We also extend our sincere appreciation to the many local businesses, organizations, volunteers, donors, and community members who contribute through financial gifts, sponsorships, in-kind donations, professional services, and other forms of support. While there are too many to recognize individually, each contribution plays an important role in helping Casa serve individuals and families in our community.

AAUW
Adept Solutions
Adventist Health Rideout Foundation
AgWest
Angie Verduzco Real Estate
Back the Badge Yuba Sutter
Behavioral Health Services Oversight and Accountability Commission
Blue Zones Project
Budget Blinds
California Department of Community Services and Development
California Department of Health Care Services
California Department of Housing and Community Development
California Partnership to End Domestic Violence
Caudill Real Estate
City of Yuba City
Columbia Bank
Commission for Behavioral Health
County of Colusa
County of Sutter
County of Yuba
e Center
Element Mortgage
First Northern Bank
Five Star Bank
Glide Foundation
Governor's Office of Emergency Services
Habitat for Humanity
Hilbers Incorporated
Interim Healthcare
Jillian Justice Insurance Agency
John Burger Heating and Air
Kiwanis Early Risers
Ledbetter Electric
Nicki Burns Real Estate
Partnership Health Plan
Phoong Law
Plumas Bank
Recology
River Valley Community Bank
Sapphire Marketing
Scrap Monkey
Soroptimist Club of Marysville-Yuba City

**We are grateful to our funding and community partners whose investment helps sustain and expand critical services throughout Yuba, Sutter, and Colusa counties.**

Soroptimist Club of Sutter-Yuba
Starbucks Foundation
Steve Gimblin Personal Injury Attorney
Stirnaman Insurance
Sutter County Children and Families Commission
Sutter County Community Action Agency
Sutter County Superintendent of Schools
Sutter Medical Foundation
Sutter-Yuba Homeless Consortium
Thurmond Consulting LLC
Watkins Heating and Air
Yuba City Police Officers' Association
Yuba County Community Services Commission
Yuba County First Five
Yuba County Office of Education
Yuba Water Agency



*Soroptimist of Marysville-Yuba City Human Trafficking Committee with backpacks of essential items for Casa's human trafficking survivors.*



*Casa and CASA of Placer, Yuba, and Sutter partnered to raise awareness about human trafficking.*





*Casa is grateful to First Northern Bank for donating five big boxes of meat to our shelter.*




*Casa Board President Cyndi Rachel and Executive Director Michelle Downing welcome Tasha Weaver from Senator Megan Dahle's office to learn about Casa's work and survivors' needs.*

HELP MAKE THIS

# CARE POSSIBLE

Each year, victim service organizations face reductions and uncertainty in state and federal funding. Community donations sustain Casa. Your support helps us care for survivors today and prepare for those who will need us tomorrow.

## Ways to support:

### MAKE A DONATION

Donate Now

### SHOP OUR AMAZON WISHLISTS

**Emergency Shelter**

**Hope Haven Counseling & Support Center**



**Casa de Esperanza I truly feel saved my life. When my world was crumbling, they did not hesitate to help me, when others closed their doors...I wish there was this service in every country across this country.**

-Survivor



**I think about if Casa de Esperanza wasn't here to be able to provide this type of support. It's scary and sad to say. Individuals are resilient, they're always going to find a way. But with us being here and being able to be that foundation... it comes a long way and it helps them succeed.**

-Elisandra Becerra, Casa Care Coordinator




# THANK YOU

FOR MAKING ROOM FOR HOPE



**www.casaysc.org**
**24/7 Crisis Line: (530) 674-2040**
**Business Center: (530) 674-5400**

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