



SDFJC Success Story

Venette's Story¹

I ended up at the San Diego Family Justice Center after surviving a long and exhausting six years of abuse. It started as emotional then verbal and the last two years became physical. I first heard about the FJC about three years ago because of my aunt's own violent relationship. I visited the Center with her briefly but did not stay for myself. At the time I didn't think my relationship was as bad as hers and I didn't think I needed help getting out. I made excuses for him and for the things that would soon turn into physical abuse. About a year later an incident happened and I knew I needed to get help. The abuse was getting worse and unfortunately our son was witnessing horrible things. I remembered the San Diego FJC and how it felt so comfortable and safe, so I knew that's where I needed to go. I arrived there to get help and immediately recognized the woman who helped my aunt a few years back. I needed a restraining order and she helped me get one along with others at the Center. However, a combination of me not feeling as supported there and my abuser painting another beautiful picture of our future led me to have the order vacated just a couple months later. I thought at the time that I was making a good choice and I was confused.

It wasn't too long after that the abuse began again. He never returned to live with us, but he made sure to be around and give the illusion that he was changing. Time went on and I began to educate myself about the cycle I was involved in. I knew that he would not get help as much as the court tried to force him to as a result of his past relationship with his daughter's mother. I decided to take all of his paperwork from years before that he kept from DV classes and I began to read his material! I taught my son some important safety tips and gave him a safety plan because his father's behavior became unpredictable. In September, the worst and last incident happened. My five year old son witnessed a full twenty minutes of his father being disgusting and completely abusive. I tried to leave with my son after the first slap that day and he held us against our will in our own home. It continued and my son and I just kept asking for it to stop. By the time the assault finally did end I realized that had I not heard my son's cries reminding me that I was the only one there to protect him. I was choked three separate times as well as slapped. During the assault, I stopped breathing and almost lost consciousness. I had been pushed off a bed and as a result of that I ended up with a fractured finger which is now the reason I cannot work as a hair stylist. I was told by doctors that my body was shutting down but my mind knew it had to keep my son safe and get him out of there, which is why I went through every phase of fainting, but my eyes did not close. They were set on my son, I had to somehow, express to him that we would be

¹ Venette provided this story to the National Family Justice Center Alliance to help encourage others to come forward for help and express appreciation for the support of the many partner agencies at the Family Justice Center. She asked that we use her real name. We love receiving stories like this daily from Centers across the United States.

OK. When we finally left and made it to my car, we both cried and gripped each other and as I did I felt as if he was helping me breath. I was tired and short of breath. I gathered myself quickly as I knew we couldn't stay in the parking garage too long. I called a friend and she called the police for me.

They met me at the San Diego Police Department in downtown where I filed my report and took photos of every visible injury. Then, Tuesday I went to the FJC after taking my son to his first day of kindergarten. I arrived and was immediately greeted by Katie, a familiar face that I felt comfortable with. I was welcomed warmly and the process began. I had to take a break to pick up my son and we returned to the Center where he was given a bag of gifts and felt safe and loved. I met with the detective assigned to my case and he was amazing. I met advocates and another survivor. I signed myself and my son up for counseling. I was surrounded by so much support. For the past year I've wanted to return to school. I've been feeling like I was put here to do something different not just hair. September 7, 2010 was the start of a new life for my son and me. Not only did we finally get out of the "prison" we were living in, but we also saw our abuser faced with charges that will hopefully keep us safe from his anger.

The true blessing that came from all of it – I have enrolled in school and know that my story of surviving six years of abuse can help someone else. I spend three days out of the week at the San Diego FJC getting help. The more I learn and the more time I spend there I realize that's where I belong. I am thankful for the obstacles I've overcome and blessed that I am breathing and my son is safe. I take complete pride in saying I survived something horrible so that something amazing could happen to my family and hopefully one day many others. Many thanks to San Diego Family Justice Center!



San Diego Family Justice Center (2005)
Success Stories
Quotes from Clients

Michelle 11-18-05

"I'm so glad place like this is available to the people who need it. What a great resource."

Nicole 11-21-05

"I feel so much better. I thought that there were no group resources available, but now that I've come here, I'm more relieved that your helpful services like this one to assist me in these matters. Thank you and God bless."

Beatriz 11-03-05

"Everybody was excellent."

Kristin 11-02-05

"Not this time but the last time I came in I had to wait for hours, (all day) to be seen by someone. This time went much quicker. Thanks for all the help."

Shirley 11-04-05

"Great willing to listen and to help find help."

ANON 11-01-05

"I appreciate all the help given under difficult circumstances. Thank you."

DeeAnn 11-15-05

"Very good support. I needed something to do with my hands. Someone went and brought me a deck of cards."

Pamela 11-15-05

"I appreciate all the support given to me today. I will contact your services in case of any other services needed. I felt very comfortable. Thank you very much."

Mike 11-10-05

"The people here are very helpful and supportive. Answered all my questions. Very very nice people."

Carolyn 11-10-05

"Chaplain was a great inspiration. I have future goals to accomplish with God! Spirit at hand. Thank you and I will add my assistance to help others who are victims who survive and return to recovery."

Rachel 11-09-05

"The entire staff really made me feel that I am doing the right thing. They were all so very helpful, friendly and I am so glad I came here. This is a wonderful program. Thank you so very much."

Stephanie 11-02-05

"You guys and gals are wonderful. Keep up the great work."

Obena 11-23-05

"I felt comfortable asking questions and I felt they were looking out for my best interest. I love this place. Have never been this happy with an office ever. I love its warm feeling."

Sally 11-29-05

"You all made an extremely uncomfortable and embarrassing experience bearable. I found this setting to be very comfortable and the staff very professional including the volunteers."

Emily 11-30-05

"It was a very positive experience for both me and my kids. And was a lot of help."

ANON 11-30-05

"Thank God for all of you!"

Natalie 11-18-05

"All the co-workers and people in the kitchen are were very very helpful. I ask God to keep them all well and safe."

Olivia 11-17-05

"Miss Angela was very polite and she was able explain to me step by step about my case. Also, the receptionist and Miss Mari were very polite and all the staff"

Alejandra 11-03-05

"Everything went very well thank you for all your love and your patience that you give to us in this difficult time that I am going through. The only thing that I want to comment about is that I spent a lot of time waiting. Thank you."

ANON 11-03-05

"My opinion is that this visit to the Family Justice Center was a lot of help and it's going to help me recuperate little by little."

Cristina 11-01-05

"They assessed me really well and they explained to me the steps that I need to take to resolve my problem."

Beatriz 11-03-05

"I was extremely satisfied with the service."

Yaneht 11-30-05

"I came here not because of a case with violence but something similar we were treated well by everyone."

Client Testimonies Included in Hope for Hurting Families: Creating Family Justice Centers Across America

Patricia

"I am so impressed with FJC. I was not aware of this facility. I came to support my friend and was treated so well and will share with all about this wonderful, comfortable place. The staff and volunteers are awesome. Thank you all for what you do."

Rose

"Lou Ann, Angela, George, Christine, all have been polite, very professional at their jobs. Excellent service; compassionate, caring, all in one package. Excellent, 10 thumbs up. God bless all of you beautiful people."

Marie

"I felt at home when I walked into the lobby. As I entered into the family room I felt impressed with all the services being provided :-)"

Christina

"The staff was very, very helpful. I am thankful for a place like this. And I hope you change nothing, because I believe you guys are great. Thank You!"

Celia

"I really appreciate the help and concern. This is exactly what someone going through these issues needs to make things easier."

Beth

"Everyone was very kind to me. I expected to be herded through like a number, but I have been treated with compassion and understanding by everyone."

Penelope

"I feel that my life is being cared about! Thank you for making me feel safe again!"

Anonymous

"I need this help to find out what to do to not be afraid. I am glad I asked the police to help me get a restraining order and they told me to come here."

Pamela

"Extremely helpful and very considerate. You explained all kinds of things to me that I did not know. Thank you very much and I appreciate all the help."

Diana

"The staff was great. All my questions were answered. They were just wonderful. Thanks."

Anonymous

"Muy Buena atencion me dieron, mucha seguridad y una buena orientacion. (I was given good attention, a safe environment, and a good orientation.)"

Elizabeth

"I felt very insecure and frightened about this decision- but everyone I met with today reassured me. I have hope!"

Veronica

"Estoy muy agradecida por la ayuda que e resivido pues nunca imagine que algien podria interesarse en alludarme gracias. (I am very grateful for the help I was given. I had never imagined that so many would show an interest in me and be willing to help. Thank you.)"

R.E.

"The ladies - Maggi, Teresa, Jean, and Helen - were very compassionate, caring, excellent service. Juan was also very compassionate. Everyone is and was very professional at what they did. I wish there were more caring people in this world. God bless all of you. Thank You."

Anonymous

"Excellent service. Very professional. I enjoy meeting with my counselor, Diane, she is great!"

Anonymous

"The chaplain does so well. He has an impact on people's lives."

Lillian

"Everyone was friendly attentive and comforting. No one judges you or makes you feel dumb or worthless. A lot of agencies have a 'talk down mentality', but that attitude isn't here at the FJC. This is a great place and much needed. It would be nice to be given an envelope for legal papers so no one can see what I am carrying when I leave. When I go home, if he's there, I don't want him to see what I have."

Isabel

"This is the best experience I have ever had in an office where I have needed any kind of service. It has been a true blessing! Thank you."

Gardenia

"Providing resources all in one place makes my visit easier with all information in one place instead of searching for options."

Brandy

"I have never in my life been through a more wonderful experience with trying to receive assistance. I can't believe there is a great system like this. I have been treated with great respect and have been made to feel very comfortable. Thank you so much for all your help."

Carolyn

"I really enjoyed my visit, the staff was so friendly and helpful. They answered all my questions at the end of my visit I felt like I had many friends. I wasn't alone anymore."

Guadalupe

"Todo estubo exelente. Me sentoi protegida, bespetada y pode enterarme de mis derechos como madre que ignoraba la Senoirita Angela fue muy amabil y me hablo con Onestidad y respecto Gracias Angela. Everything was excellent. I felt protected and respected. I learned about my rights as a mother. Miss Angela was very kind, she spoke to me with honesty and respect. Thank you, Angela."

Veronica

"Mesenti muy trqanquila yaura se que tengo muchos derechos y estoy muy protegida. Gracias por darme mucho informacion que no sabia. I felt at ease. I now know I have rights and am protected. Thank you for giving me so much information that I didn't know about."

Catrin

"I appreciate the patience and empathy everyone has shown me. The doctor and nurse were very detailed and understanding."

Anonymous

"I feel better speaking to this staff vs. how the officers who came to take my report. It was so much more informative and assuring here."

Tiffany

"I think it's wonderful that food and beverages are provided for clients and everyone I spoke with today was great and encouraging."

Yaneht

"I came here not because of a case with violence but emotional abuse and was treated well by everyone."

Anonymous

"My opinion is that this visit to the Family Justice Center was a lot of help and it's going to help me recuperate little by little."

Olivia

"Miss Angela was very polite and she was able to explain to me, step by step, about my case. Also, the receptionist and Miss Mari were very polite and all the staff."

Sally

"You all made an extremely uncomfortable and embarrassing experience bearable. I found this setting to be very comfortable and the staff very professional including the volunteers."

Carolyn Marshall

"The chaplain was a great inspiration. I have future goals to accomplish with God! Thank you and I will one day offer my assistance to help others who are victims."

DeeAnn

"You provided very good support. I needed something to do with my hands. Someone went and brought me a deck of cards!"

Nicole

"I feel so much better. I thought that there were no group resources available, but now that I've come here, I'm more relieved that your helpful services are here to assist me in these matters. Thank you and God bless."

Tammie

"I came in this morning worried and dreading this experience. But the staff and workers here helped me leave here with hope. Thank you very much."

Robert

"This program is wonderful for us. It's very rare that this kind of thing happens to me but this place is helping me get through this. Thank you very much."

Natalie

"The place is a warm environment. The people are very friendly, helpful and professional and I am thankful this place exists."

Sherry

"Everyone was very polite, friendly and professional and understanding. The lounge area was so cheerful and fun and the children's playroom was fantastic."

Todd

"You guys are very great people, thank you, and God bless you! The people here are the only people that seemed to care and understand my situation. I can't thank them enough for listening to me and believing in me. Domestic abuse in the gay community is just as painful and serious as any other form of domestic violence, but usually no one cares."

Marie

"I felt I was safe, not pushed or intimidated. It was a great experience and they even fed me. I was hungry too. I enjoyed seeing my girls be kids again. I was apprehensive coming in thinking I could do this on my own. Thanks for your help in making me feel at ease."

Amber

"As embarrassing as the incidents were, I was made to feel comfortable and was not judged. Greatly appreciate assistance. I was utterly flabbergasted. The entire process was family friendly, organized and professional, yet nurturing and caring. Everyone treated me with dignity and respect. They even fed me and thought about my children who weren't even here at the Center. Why hasn't this Center been available for us before?! I praise God for each of you. And I thank you for your patience and kindness. God be with you."

Tim

"All of my questions were answered and I was informed of procedures and the way the process works. This is new to me but it's been easy for me to grasp the process because of the assistance. I felt a sense of hope when I came here."

Andrea

"I liked the purple outfits!!!"

Catherine

"I felt at ease. They assured me several times I came to the right place. It seemed everyone did their best possible job. Thank you for all the help."