

## Press Release

**FOR RELEASE THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 17**

Contact: Lynne Skinner  
Chief Communications Officer, The SAFE Alliance  
512.645.4595 or [lskinner@safeaustin.org](mailto:lskinner@safeaustin.org)

**AUSTIN CHILDREN'S SHELTER AND SAFEPLACE  
COME TOGETHER TO ADDRESS VIOLENCE AND ABUSE**  
*Organization now called "SAFE"*

(September 17, 2015; AUSTIN, TX): In order to deliver more comprehensive services and better address the spectrum of needs for individuals and families affected by violence and abuse, the Boards of Directors of Austin Children's Shelter and SafePlace have created an operational merger between the two organizations. The new organization is called The SAFE Alliance, or **SAFE |** Stop Abuse For Everyone.

"We formed a partnership 2 ½ years ago and began increasing our effectiveness and efficiencies almost immediately," said Kelly White, CEO of SAFE. "Our learnings about the intersections of the many types of violence and abuse have been significant, allowing us to increase access to services and provide stronger advocacy, awareness and prevention programming."

White, who has served as executive director of the Austin Children's Shelter and SafePlace during her career, has been named as CEO of SAFE; Julia Spann, most recently the executive director of SafePlace, now serves as President of the new agency.

"SAFE is creating a new way to address the issues of abuse, violence and neglect," said Spann. "We are better together and, more importantly, the people we serve are better off because of our partnership."

SafePlace and Austin Children's Shelter, both of which provide critical intervention services in our community, will continue as separate non-profit corporations operating as supporting corporations to SAFE.

The issues of child abuse, domestic violence and sexual assault evolved separately as concerns in the public arena and are typically addressed through different governmental systems – including funding and regulations. Increasingly, however, research and systemic responses are recognizing that these issues often exist simultaneously or sequentially in the lives of people who have experience abuse and violence.

Thomasina Tijerna, a survivor of childhood abuse, domestic violence and sexual assault says, "I know I'm not the only one. I hope this will eventually become the norm for how domestic violence, child abuse and sexual assault are treated."

(more)

### **Priorities and Programs**

The highest priority will continue to be the safety of all victims, survivors and at-risk individuals and families. This includes the Campus-Based Intervention Services historically associated with Austin Children's Shelter and SafePlace facilities: emergency shelter, 24/7 Hotline, various types and levels of supportive housing, counseling and therapeutic services, and survivor advocacy.

With White and Spann assuming new and broader responsibilities across the entire SAFE organization, two existing vice presidents of SAFE will take over as executive directors for their respective agencies: Stacy Bruce for Austin Children's Shelter and Melinda Cantu for SafePlace.

All Prevention and Community-based Programs will become the responsibility of SAFE Vice President, Coni Stogner. These programs include: Care Academy, Expect Respect, Strong Start, PlanetSafe, Deaf Services, Disability Services, the Forensic Nursing and Advocacy Program (and Eloise House), Volunteers, Community Advocacy, Community Education, Legal Advocacy and Life Skills training.

### **Combined Strength and Impact**

Bringing Austin Children's Shelter and SafePlace together as SAFE has been a monumental task. All finance, IT, human resources, facilities, communications, information systems, development and fundraising functions are merged and operate under the SAFE umbrella, resulting in increased efficiency and effectiveness. SAFE has 320+/- employees, 850+/- direct service volunteers, a 2015 budget of \$18 million, owns or leases 22 acres of land, and operates 20 different buildings comprising hundreds of thousands of square feet of space. Most importantly, SAFE, Austin Children's Shelter and SafePlace are working together to protect, teach, advocate, house, mentor, feed, counsel and help to heal thousands of people in our community every year.

"Our staff, board and volunteers have been vigorously dedicated to ensuring a smooth transition and even better outcomes for each client," said White. "Their dedication, compassion and boundless energy with each person we serve never ceases to amaze me."

More information on programs and services are available at the organization's new website beginning September 17: <http://www.safeaustin.org>.

### **The SAFE Alliance**

The SAFE Alliance, or SAFE, is an Austin, Texas-based 501(c)(3) organization and a partnership of Austin Children's Shelter and SafePlace – both separate 501(c)(3)s which now operate as supporting agencies of SAFE. The organization is dedicated to ending violence in Central Texas through prevention, advocacy and comprehensive services for individuals, families and communities that have been affected by, or are at risk of, abuse. SAFE is committed to changing lives (by effecting outcomes for survivors), systems (by making them more responsive), and communities (by generating healthier, more respectful environments). SAFE | Stop Abuse For Everyone.