SAFE | stop abuse for everyone

SEARCH FOR

Chief Operating Officer

Position Guide
November 2026

The SAFE Alliance
Austin, Texas







SEARCH FOR CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER (COO)

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SAFE Gala Gallery of Hope 2026.

AT A GLANCE

POSITION
Chief Operating Officer (COO)

REPORTS TO
Chief Executive Officer, Dr. Pierre Berastaín

LEADERSHIP TEAM
Member of an Executive Leadership Team of approximately 9 leaders

ORGANIZATION
$36.6 million operating budget
267 employees

FOOTPRINT
Multiple facilities and service locations across Central Texas

LOCATION
Austin, Texas (hybrid, with substantial on-site engagement)

SCOPE
Enterprise operations, programs and housing operations, technology, people operations, facilities, security, compliance, data, and organizational infrastructure

SALARY RANGE
$150,000–$170,000

OVERVIEW

The work that changes lives depends on systems most people never see.

SAFE is a comprehensive human-service organization serving individuals and families during some of the most vulnerable moments of their lives. Survivors seek safety. Children seek stability. Families seek housing, healing, and hope.

Our employees care deeply about the people we serve. They also work in an environment that must remain deeply trauma-informed, recognizing both what clients bring through our doors and the weight employees may carry through their own lived experience and the work itself.

As SAFE has grown in size and complexity, some of our organizational systems, structures, and processes have not evolved at the same pace. **We are recruiting a COO to help change that.**

> The opportunity is to build the operating infrastructure that allows people doing profoundly important work to focus more on the person in front of them and less on the paperwork surrounding them.

MISSION

To interrupt the cycle of abuse by cultivating safety, healing, and just outcomes for those impacted.

VISION

To foster a safe community free from violence and abuse.

ABOUT THE SAFE ALLIANCE

An integrated system of care, built by a community over decades.

Rather than scattering services across many organizations, Austin invested in one integrated system, so survivors can move from crisis to stability without navigating fragmentation, delay, or retraumatization.

The SAFE Alliance was formed through the merger of Austin Children's Shelter and SafePlace, two long-standing organizations serving survivors and vulnerable populations in Central Texas. Today SAFE operates a broad continuum of care that supports individuals and families from crisis through long-term stability.

That continuum includes a 24-hour SAFEline, emergency shelter and housing, forensic nursing care, counseling, legal advocacy, parenting and family support, foster and adoption services, prevention education, and long-term support. In its 2024–2025 Annual Report, SAFE describes itself as the largest organization providing these services in the South and the third largest in the nation, and as core public safety and public health infrastructure for Austin.



A SAFE campus in Austin. Source: SAFE 2024–2025 Annual Report.

A TRAUMA-INFORMED WORKPLACE

SAFE recognizes both what clients bring through its doors and what employees may carry through their own lived experience and the work itself. The COO must build systems that support accountability without sacrificing humanity, discipline without unnecessary bureaucracy, and operational consistency without losing mission focus.

SAFE BY THE NUMBERS

Fiscal year 2025–26 figures from SAFE's 2025–2026 Annual Report, except the nightly shelter average, which reflects current data. Current budget and staffing appear in the Overview.

26,783
Answered SAFEline requests for safety planning and support

5,000+
Youth and adult survivors of domestic and sexual violence who found care through SAFE

1,000
Average number of people served each night in shelter

27,834
Community members and professionals who received violence prevention and intervention training

1,705
Children who received housing, after-school care, foster placement, counseling, and other supportive services

646
Survivors who received legal services or representation in court

PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

Child Abuse Prevention and Response

Legal advocacy, parenting support, and counseling to keep families safely together when possible; foster and adoptive placements; and support for young people transitioning from foster care to independent living.

Sexual Assault Crisis Care and Prevention

Eloise House is Travis County's primary sexual assault clinic, providing advocacy, forensic exams, legal support, counseling, and community resources.

Domestic Violence

Emergency shelter and housing, counseling and peer support groups, legal aid, supervised visitation, parenting support, and job skills for individuals and families fleeing violence.

Sex Trafficking

Advocates in SAFE's CARES program build trusting relationships with survivors and connect them with safety planning, housing, legal advocacy, medical care, counseling, and peer support.



Rendering of The Lancaster. Source: SAFE 2024–2025 Annual Report.

> Housing is violence prevention.

A GROWING HOUSING PORTFOLIO

SAFE is expanding its housing work through three new projects that provide trauma-informed, supportive environments. These projects add significant operational complexity and are central to the COO's housing and facilities oversight.

Community Shelter

A specialized emergency shelter with 40 private units, developed in partnership with the City of Austin and operated directly by SAFE. Opened fall 2025.

The Lancaster

60 units of permanent supportive housing near SAFE's Rathgeber Village campus. Scheduled to open and begin welcoming residents in 2027.

The Sasha

60 units (30 permanent supportive, 30 transitional) on SAFE's Grove Boulevard campus. Scheduled to open in early 2027.

Project timelines as of November 2026.

STRATEGIC PLAN PRIORITIES

SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

Financial stability, unification and efficiency across the organization, and stronger infrastructure.

CULTURE

A fair, collaborative workplace, workforce retention and well-being, and leadership development.

MISSION CENTRIC

Aligning funding and programs with mission-critical work and enhancing service delivery and scalability.

COMMUNICATION

Public awareness, donor engagement, and stronger internal communication and collaboration.

THE OPPORTUNITY

SAFE's next chapter is operational.

SAFE has significant functional expertise and a strong commitment to its mission. It is comparatively thin in enterprise operations.



SAFE's Foster & Adopt team at a community outreach event.

Enterprise operations is the organizational capability required to connect functions, establish clear decision rights, create repeatable processes, strengthen accountability, and translate strategy into execution.

Historically, some of that integration has depended on individual knowledge, relationships, and people stepping in when something simply had to get done. That resourcefulness has served SAFE. **It is not, by itself, a sustainable operating model for the future.**

The next COO will help SAFE move from dependence on heroic effort to reliance on strong organizational systems.

THE OPERATING MODEL THE COO WILL HELP BUILD

Responsibilities and decision rights are clear

Cross-functional work has defined ownership

Organizational systems are simple, useful, and repeatable

Leaders have greater clarity about expectations and accountability

Fewer problems require executive intervention or individual heroics

Infrastructure supports, rather than distracts from, mission delivery

> The goal is not to create more process. The goal is to create the right amount of process so SAFE can operate with greater clarity, consistency, and effectiveness.

KEY OPPORTUNITIES

Build enterprise operating systems

Establish sustainable organizational processes that clarify ownership, improve communication, strengthen accountability, and improve execution across all functions.

Translate strategy into execution

The Board and CEO are establishing ambitious goals for SAFE's future. The COO will build the operational infrastructure needed to turn those goals into measurable outcomes.

Build sustainable accountability

Create systems that allow leaders to operate effectively without requiring executive intervention for routine cross-functional decisions.

Strengthen program and housing operations

SAFE is implementing a new executive structure to support programs and housing. The COO will provide day-to-day executive oversight for programmatic, housing, and service-delivery operations.

Modernize organizational infrastructure

Provide leadership for enterprise technology, data governance, compliance systems, performance management, organizational reporting, risk management, and operational effectiveness.

THE HARD(ER) PART

Designing better systems may be one of the easier parts of this job. Getting people to invest in them will be harder.

SAFE is in a period of meaningful organizational change at a time when uncertainty around funding can make any change feel more consequential. Employees are already working hard. New systems may initially require additional effort before they make work easier.

The COO cannot assume that because a change makes sense organizationally, its value will be obvious individually. The successful leader will be able to explain both:

> **Why does this make SAFE stronger?**
>
> **How will this ultimately make my work clearer, more sustainable, or more effective?**

The COO must also approach SAFE's existing systems with curiosity and respect. Some will need to change. That does not mean the people who built them were wrong. Many existing practices developed in response to real organizational needs. The COO should understand that history before redesigning the future.

The right candidate will lean into difficult decisions. They will lead change without requiring the past to be wrong for the future to be better.



Dr. Pierre Berastaín
Chief Executive Officer
The SAFE Alliance

MEET THE CEO

His executive team jokes that SOP stands for **“Speed of Pierre.”**

Dr. Pierre Berastaín is a high-energy, systems-oriented CEO with a strong point of view, a high bar, and little attachment to the status quo for its own sake. He knows SAFE’s programmatic work deeply, leads with both ambition and care, and is willing to rethink structures, practices, and assumptions when a better way becomes visible.

He is highly externally oriented and wants senior leaders who will help shape that change, not simply implement decisions already made.

IN HIS WORDS: GREATEST STRENGTHS

I am willing to challenge the status quo and try new approaches.

“I do not assume that an existing practice should continue simply because it has always been done that way. I have a strong point of view and move quickly when I see an opportunity, but I am also genuinely willing to listen, change my mind, and borrow good ideas from outside the nonprofit sector.”

I back our leaders while holding a high bar for accountability.

“I give people room to lead, take responsibility for protecting and supporting my team, and am willing to stand behind leaders making difficult decisions. I also expect ownership, follow-through, candor, and results.”

WHERE A COUNTERBALANCE IS MOST VALUABLE

Prioritization, sequencing, and disciplined execution

Pierre generates ideas and sees opportunities quickly. He benefits from a partner who can distinguish what should happen now from what should happen later, translate ambition into realistic sequencing and ownership, and ensure important work gets finished without requiring his continued involvement.

Independent judgment about pace, capacity, and tradeoffs

Pierre needs a COO who can challenge assumptions, identify when organizational capacity does not yet match ambition, and say “yes,” “not yet,” or “no” without turning disagreement into a contest over authority.

THE LEADERSHIP PARTNERSHIP

The CEO sets the direction. The COO turns it into organizational reality.

The CEO will retain primary responsibility for organizational strategy and vision, Board leadership, external affairs, advocacy, major partnerships, governmental relationships, institutional positioning, and fundraising leadership.

The COO will help turn that vision into organizational reality. This relationship will require significant trust, candor, and alignment. The strongest partnership will expect healthy disagreement and challenge while providing the organization with clarity and consistency.

This partnership will be particularly important in programming, housing, and service delivery. While the CEO will remain highly engaged in strategic direction, community impact, major partnerships, public leadership, and long-term organizational priorities, the COO will oversee day-to-day operational execution through programmatic executive leadership and ensure that strategic priorities translate into measurable organizational results.

The COO will be expected to make decisions, establish expectations, redesign structures and processes where appropriate, manage through senior leaders, and address performance. **This person will function as an extension of the CEO, not a parallel center of organizational leadership.**

The relationship works best when both leaders operate with trust, transparency, and mutual accountability. The COO is expected to bring independent judgment, challenge assumptions when appropriate, and provide informed recommendations regarding organizational capacity, prioritization, sequencing, and execution.

> The goal is not agreement on every issue, but alignment around what best serves SAFE's mission and long-term success.

COMPLEMENTARY LEADERSHIP

CEO

Vision, strategy, advocacy, external relationships, and institutional advancement

- Organizational strategy and vision
- Board leadership and governance
- Fundraising leadership
- Advocacy, external affairs, and public leadership
- Major partnerships and governmental relationships
- Institutional positioning and community impact
- Long-term vision for housing and programming

COO

Execution, organizational performance, operational alignment, and enterprise-wide coordination

- Enterprise operations and organizational systems
- Day-to-day organizational execution
- Program and housing operations oversight
- Leadership accountability and performance management
- Cross-functional coordination
- Technology and infrastructure
- Service-delivery execution

POSITION SUMMARY

Real authority to shape how SAFE operates.

The COO serves as SAFE's senior executive leader for organizational operations, enterprise execution, and service-delivery performance.

Reporting directly to the CEO and serving on the Executive Leadership Team, the COO functions as the CEO's primary operational partner and the executive responsible for translating organizational strategy into coordinated execution.

SAFE's executive leadership structure is intentionally designed to balance deep functional expertise with strong enterprise-wide coordination.

The COO will partner with programmatic executive leadership and the CEO to advance the operational effectiveness, quality, coordination, and performance of SAFE's housing programs, client services, shelter operations, prevention programs, intervention services, and related mission-delivery functions.

The CEO will continue to lead organizational strategy, advocacy, external partnerships, community impact, and long-term vision for SAFE's housing and programming work. The COO will provide day-to-day executive leadership, operational oversight, performance management, and accountability for the execution of those priorities, and will ensure that programmatic, housing, and service-delivery operations are properly integrated with organizational infrastructure, compliance requirements, data systems, financial realities, workforce planning, and enterprise-wide priorities.

EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP PORTFOLIO

The COO will provide executive leadership and oversight for the following organizational functions.

01	Programs and Service Delivery	02	Housing Operations
03	People and Culture	04	Data, Impact, Systems and Compliance (DISC)
05	Information Technology	06	Buildings and Facilities
07	Security Operations	08	Family Essential Services (warehouse operations)

The core portfolio is intentionally designed with some flexibility. Depending on the experience and strengths of the successful candidate, as well as SAFE's evolving needs, the COO may assume oversight of additional functions over time. We are less interested in preserving a fixed organizational chart than in building the strongest leadership structure for SAFE.

DECISION-MAKING AUTHORITY

The COO is expected to function as the CEO's delegated executive leader for enterprise operations and organizational execution. While not all executive functions report directly to the COO, the COO will have CEO-delegated authority to establish organizational operating systems, drive execution of enterprise priorities, create accountability mechanisms, clarify ownership, and ensure cross-functional work moves effectively across the organization.

DIRECT AUTHORITY

Within the functions reporting to the COO

The COO leads through senior leaders.

- Establish priorities
- Redesign structures and workflows
- Improve operating systems
- Allocate resources
- Set performance expectations
- Address operational challenges through senior leaders

DELEGATED ENTERPRISE-WIDE AUTHORITY

Across the broader organization

Functional leaders retain accountability for their areas of expertise while participating in these operating systems.

- Operating expectations
- Accountability mechanisms
- Escalation pathways
- Cross-functional management processes that support execution of organizational priorities

ALIGNED WITH THE CEO

Remain ultimately accountable to the CEO

Significant matters involving:

- Enterprise-wide strategy
- Executive-level personnel decisions
- Board governance
- Major organizational risk

ORGANIZATIONAL EXECUTION

The COO will have significant responsibility for cross-functional organizational execution, building and managing the systems that allow all functions to work together effectively. This includes:

- Building organizational processes and management systems
- Translating strategy into implementation
- Clarifying decision rights, ownership, and accountability
- Creating effective cross-functional operating processes
- Strengthening performance management
- Simplifying unnecessary complexity
- Building systems that reduce dependence on individual institutional knowledge
- Creating clear escalation paths when responsibilities intersect or organizational risk emerges

TECHNOLOGY AND ENTERPRISE INFRASTRUCTURE

A significant part of this work will involve strengthening SAFE's technology and enterprise infrastructure. The COO will provide executive leadership for enterprise systems strategy, data governance and reporting, cybersecurity and organizational risk management oversight, and the thoughtful use of technology to improve mission delivery, employee experience, and operational efficiency.

The COO does not need to be the organization's technical expert, but should be able to set direction, ask the right questions, and ensure technology investments are aligned with organizational strategy and operational needs.

The COO should be comfortable with complexity without adding to it. You will not be expected to be the functional expert in every area you oversee. **The role is to create the environment in which strong leaders can be successful.**

BOARD ENGAGEMENT

The COO may periodically support presentations, planning discussions, and operational reporting to SAFE's Board of Directors and Board committees as needed.

The CEO retains primary responsibility for Board leadership, governance, external relationships, fundraising leadership, and institutional positioning.

BOARD AND LEADERSHIP ENVIRONMENT

SAFE's leadership team and Board are committed to strengthening the Board's role in advancing the organization and ensuring the long-term sustainability of its work. This role operates in close partnership with the CEO and Board, with shared ownership of key relationships and organizational outcomes.

The COO, alongside the Chief Development Officer (CDO) and other Executive Team members, will play an important role in:

- Building shared accountability across leadership for organizational success
- Strengthening Board engagement, participation, and strategic contribution
- Establishing clear expectations, structures, and support systems for effective Board involvement
- Activating and supporting executive leaders and Board members in advancing SAFE's mission, priorities, and community relationships
- Ensuring strategic priorities are translated into sustainable operational execution



Construction underway on a SAFE housing development. Source: SAFE 2024–2025 Annual Report.



Groundbreaking for new SAFE housing. Source: SAFE 2024–2025 Annual Report.

AN EVOLVING SCOPE

The successful candidate should be comfortable with a role whose scope may evolve as trust is built, organizational needs become clearer, and their own strengths create opportunities for broader leadership.

CANDIDATE PROFILE

We care more about evidence that you have done this work than whether your previous title was COO.

SAFE seeks an accomplished executive who can balance organizational discipline with a deeply human approach to leadership. The successful candidate will combine confidence with humility and possess the judgment to make difficult decisions while remaining open to learning and adapting.

REQUIRED QUALIFICATIONS

- Bachelor's degree or equivalent combination of education and relevant executive leadership experience
- Ten or more years of progressive senior leadership experience in complex organizations of comparable scale and operational complexity
- Experience leading through senior leaders and executive teams
- Demonstrated success building organizational systems, infrastructure, and management processes
- Experience leading organizational change and cross-functional execution
- Demonstrated ability to create accountability, improve performance, and clarify decision-making authority
- Ability to operate effectively in complex, mission-driven environments

PREFERRED QUALIFICATIONS

- Advanced degree in Business Administration, Public Administration, Organizational Leadership, Human Resources, Nonprofit Management, or related field
- Experience in nonprofit, healthcare, human services, public-sector, or other mission-driven organizations
- Experience working closely with Boards of Directors and executive leadership teams
- Experience overseeing enterprise systems, technology strategy, compliance, data governance, or organizational risk management

THIS ROLE IS UNLIKELY TO BE A FIT IF

- You believe a technically strong system is successful simply because it was designed well.
- You struggle to balance trauma-informed, human-first approaches with organizational systems and operational discipline.
- You believe "move fast and break things" is an appropriate leadership philosophy in a mission-driven human-services environment.
- You approach existing systems primarily by identifying what previous leaders got wrong.
- You default toward increasingly complex solutions when simpler ones would achieve the desired outcome.
- You need consensus before making difficult decisions.
- Your confidence comes primarily from positional authority rather than trust, influence, and credibility.
- You derive more satisfaction from solving crises yourself than creating systems that prevent them.
- You are uncomfortable being changed by what you learn after you arrive.



SAFE's Touch-a-Truck 2025.

THE STRONGEST CANDIDATES WILL HAVE DEMONSTRATED EXPERIENCE

- Building organizational processes and management systems
- Leading cross-functional execution in complex organizations
- Clarifying decision rights and accountability
- Managing through senior functional leaders
- Leading complex human-services, housing, healthcare, behavioral-health, shelter, or community-based service-delivery systems through senior operational leaders
- Providing executive oversight for multiple mission-delivery functions while balancing operational priorities, compliance requirements, organizational strategy, and mission outcomes
- Managing senior leaders responsible for direct service delivery, housing operations, client-facing programs, or other large-scale community impact functions
- Creating operational discipline without unnecessary bureaucracy
- Translating strategy into implementation
- Improving organizational performance
- Leading meaningful change
- Building systems that reduce dependence on individual institutional knowledge

COMPENSATION, BENEFITS, AND APPLICATION PROCESS

Meaningful leadership starts with strong support.

COMPENSATION

$150,000–$170,000

Salary range for this position, commensurate with experience.

BENEFITS

SAFE's benefits are designed to care for the whole person so you can focus on advancing our mission and strengthening our impact.

- A benefits package designed to support your well-being, sustainability, and long-term impact, featuring employer-paid health, life, and disability coverage along with a suite of flexible, family-friendly benefit options
- Generous paid time off, holidays, and personal days to encourage balance and support employee wellness
- Eligibility to participate in a 403(b) retirement plan with employer contributions that grow with tenure
- Benefits that begin shortly after hire, reflecting our commitment to supporting those who drive meaningful change from day one

LOCATION

This is a hybrid role based in **Austin, Texas**, requiring regular in-person engagement across SAFE locations and throughout the community.

Given the importance of relationship-building, operational visibility, collaboration, and leadership presence, candidates should expect substantial on-site engagement with staff, facilities, partners, and stakeholders.

SAFE'S NEXT CHAPTER

We need a COO who can build the organizational infrastructure required for SAFE's next chapter.

If we are successful, SAFE will become more disciplined without becoming less human, more accountable without becoming heavier, and better able to support the people doing the work that matters most.

HOW TO APPLY

Please submit applications through SAFE's official application process only. We are unable to accept resumes or application materials through email, LinkedIn, social media, or other unofficial channels.

Applications will be reviewed on a rolling basis, and candidates will receive updates throughout the process via email.

Position will remain open until filled.

APPLY ONLINE

safeaustin.e3applicants.com

All qualified candidates are strongly encouraged to apply.

The SAFE Alliance is an Equal Opportunity Employer committed to creating an inclusive workplace that reflects the communities it serves.

SAFE does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, national origin, age, disability, veteran status, or any other protected status under applicable law.

SAFE | stop abuse for everyone

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