



The Impact and Opportunity of Our Nonprofit Sector

Casa Marianella: Impact Through

Casa Marianella is a small nonprofit homeless shelter located in East Austin. Since 1986, it has served as a home, a refuge, and a waypoint — connecting newly immigrating families to invaluable resources to promote long-term stability. Jennifer Long, Executive Director of Casa Marianella, describes Casa clients as young, productive, and highly motivated. Most Casa residents flee their home countries because of political violence based on their race, religion, sexual identity, or social group. They come to the United States seeking asylum and a better life. Casa Marianella understands that the decision to leave one’s country of origin is complicated and deeply personal. Staff at Casa are also acutely aware of the numerous challenges new immigrants face with health issues, food insecurity, and an inability to secure affordable housing. Casa meets people in this challenging time with a sense of empathy and urgency.

In 2018, Casa Marianella provided housing, food, and full supportive services to 425 homeless immigrants from 32 different countries. Casa operates three shelter programs out of eleven houses in East Austin. Residents length of stay in these homes ranges from a few days to three months. Casa provides case management, language classes, immigration legal services, access to physical and mental health care, nutritious food, clothing, and necessities such as a bed, shower, and laundry. In addition to these eleven homes, Casa operates a transitional program, Transition to Independence, using owned and rented houses and apartments in Austin. Residents pay a small monthly rent to stay in these homes as they transition from shelter to independence. Casa is able to waive rent for one or more months depending on each situation. Separate numbers are not provided for Transition to Independence, as many people move from one of Casa’s three shelter programs to this program on their journey to self-sufficiency.

Casa Marianella Shelters and Families Served in 2018



Adult Shelter



Posada Esperanza
(For families headed by women)



Casa Salaam
(For father only or 2 parent families)

95%

Transition to stable independent living

It is Casa’s goal to connect individuals and families with the immediate support they need to be able to achieve independence and self-sufficiency in the United States. This is why the services are plentiful and the stays are relatively short. This quick and intensive model has a 95% success rate in transitioning

residents to affordable housing and sufficient income upon exiting a shelter. Casa Marianella's work spreads quickly by word of mouth. Clients come from all over the world and many contact the organization directly from detention centers.

In 2018....



77% of residents, including dozens of infants, children and teens, were released to Casa Marianella from immigration detention.



84% of residents were seeking asylum or had recently been granted asylum.

Casa Marianella effectively connects multiple organizations and resources to best serve their clients, leading to positive outcomes for individuals, families, and the larger community. People seeking asylum in the United States are faced with an uphill battle. Many have taken long, expensive, and taxing journeys to arrive in this country. Once they cross the border, they turn themselves in and are held in detention centers until they are approved to apply for asylum. Upon approval, people are released and left to find food, shelter, and a lawyer to try their case. Asylum cases cost anywhere from \$5,000 to \$10,000, an astronomical fee for many. The time between release from detention and an asylum case hearing leaves people in a state of uncertainty. Even when the person or family seeking asylum does exactly what is expected of them and is granted permission to stay in the United States to pursue their case, no formal system exists to provide stability and support in this time of transition.

In fiscal year 2018, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services received an estimated 106,147 affirmative asylum applications, meaning over 100,000 people were left in limbo as they awaited court proceedings.¹ A handful of nonprofit organizations, such as Casa Marianella, fill this immense gap in the immigrant community's needs to the best of their ability. By working with partners, including Austin's Medical Access Program (MAP)², the City of Austin, and their own professional immigration legal team, Casa is able to address needs that no other entity is meeting. Furthermore, Casa Marianella is able to do this work for \$20 per bed per night, compared to the \$208 per night the Federal Government spends on immigrant detention.³ For this \$20 per night, Casa helped 404 men, women, and children achieve an independent and financially secure living situation in 2018; this is a small fraction of the 100,000+ that need assistance. However, rather than costing taxpayers \$208 per day, these 404 individuals and families are now contributing to the local economy by working and/or paying taxes. Their children are enrolled in school, and those unable to work are receiving the support they need.

By providing a route to stability and independence for 404 new immigrants that would otherwise be in detention centers, Casa Marianella took a \$84,032 per day taxpayer loss and turned it into what is likely a long-term positive gain.

Director Jennifer Long credits Casa Marianella's success to the generosity of the public and a certain amount of "scrappiness." Casa Marianella hosts a staff of 28 people, all of whom are passionate about the work. These individuals' commitment to public good and dedication to service help keep the clients at the center. It is this person-centered mindset, in concert with the flexible nature of the nonprofit environment, that allows Casa Marianella to maintain impressive outcomes and meet increasing demand. In 2018, Casa served an additional 83 families sent directly to the organization by border agents without prior notice. Casa did not have space for most of these families, but managed to provide very short-term housing on overflow and necessities of life while scrambling for a more permanent solution. The permanent solution came in the form of a National Network of Housing Partners. By fostering connections throughout the United States, Casa Marianella redirected families to partners across the country, covering travel costs that amounted to tens of thousands of dollars. It is this type of commitment, passion, grit, and connectivity that makes nonprofit organizations critical to the social and economic fabric of Texas.



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¹ Jie Zong et al., "Frequently Requested Statistics on Immigrants and Immigration in the United States," Migrationpolicy.org, April 15, 2019, accessed June 26, 2019, <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/frequently-requested-statistics-immigrants-and-immigration-united-states#Refugees>

² MAP (Medical Access Program) is health coverage for indigent people living in Austin. MAP provides coverage/access to healthcare, not the healthcare itself. But by enrolling residents in MAP, they can access healthcare through community clinics.

³ "The Math of Immigration Detention, 2018 Update: Costs Continue to Multiply," National Immigration Forum, accessed June 24, 2019, <https://immigrationforum.org/article/math-immigration-detention-2018-update-costs-continue-multiply/>.