

Joaquin, 17

Joaquin was addicted to crystal meth at age 9, in rehab at 12, in a gang at 13, and became a father at 16. He was violent toward his mother, and continued gang activity and drug use, which led his mother to give up custody. Severe conflicts at home and probation violations left him with two choices: Juvenile Hall or Casa Youth Shelter. During his first days at Casa, he was guarded and refused to participate. But through counseling and the structured environment, he began making profound progress. While at Casa, he became more cooperative in his treatment and in the house. He was thankful, saying that he finally felt accepted and cared for. His demeanor changed from reserved and angry to hopeful. Currently living in a group home, Joaquin is doing very well and is appreciative of his second chance.

24-Hour Crisis Hotline (800) 914-CASA (2272)



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Amy, 14

Amy's mother struggled to find stable housing and employment, and to maintain her sobriety, for most of Amy's life. After losing their apartment, Amy's mother fled, leaving her and her three siblings in an unsafe environment. Amy found safety at Casa Youth Shelter. She was fraught with guilt and depression, admitting to several suicide attempts in the past. Family sessions started out angry and accusatory, but eventually made great progress. Unfortunately, Amy's mother lost custody of all four of the children. She needed to find housing and counseling services to get them back. She began attending parenting classes. Casa provided her with referrals for low income housing and counseling. After a remarkable turnaround, the family has been reunited and has safe housing. Casa continues to provide the family with resources and donations.

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Lyndsey, 17

Lyndsey, within months of turning 18, was on the brink of homelessness. Severe conflict forced her mother to bring her to Casa Youth Shelter. In counseling, she revealed a troubled childhood, including a sexual assault. Casa staff and counseling helped her navigate not only an upcoming law enforcement interview, but also her overwhelming emotions. She remained anxious that she would have nowhere to go in a matter of weeks and no way to get to her high school graduation. Immediate action was put in place for graduation and family reunification. Lyndsey received individual counseling while her mother began attending family counseling. The lines of communication began to open. Lyndsey was joyfully reunited with her family. She also received her diploma and is currently attending community college.

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Justin, 17

Homeless and desperate, Justin came to Casa Youth Shelter. He and his mother had been evicted from their apartment and his mother, in the hospital, was unable to participate in his life. His 18th birthday was in 20 days. Recently enlisted in the Marine Corps, Justin was scheduled for basic training—pending completion of his high school requirements. During his time at Casa, Justin received tutoring, and earned his high school diploma. He was determined to leave the house on his birthday, so Casa put all resources to work to ensure he stayed on track once he was gone. Now living with a sister he reconnected with while at Casa, Justin got his driver's license and has secured two part-time jobs. He maintains his plan to enter the military.

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Nick, 16

Nick struggled for years with his sexual orientation, depression, and thoughts of suicide. Raised in a conservative household, he was afraid to express his feelings. His internalized shame grew, and he developed feelings of low self-worth, gradually causing him to become closed-off and angry. He began lashing out at his parents. Once Nick “came out” to his family, they stopped talking to him. His counselor referred him to Casa Youth Shelter, where Nick worked on managing his anger and improving his communication skills. During family therapy sessions, he and his parents were able to resolve misunderstandings. Nick was motivated to improve their relationship, complete high school, and eventually go to college. Casa referred him to community programs specific to his needs. Nick and his family are doing well and continuing with aftercare and the Parenting and Teen Drop-In programs.

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Ryan, 14

Due to abuse and neglect, Ryan had lived in foster placements until he was 13, when an aunt and uncle stepped in. However, after a conflict escalated to physical altercations, his aunt and uncle brought Ryan to Casa Youth Shelter. Ryan received individual and group therapy, while his aunt and uncle participated in family sessions. Ryan developed insight into his own actions, acknowledging that it was easier for him to fight and push people away than to express and receive love. He became aware that being emotionally vulnerable was risky, and had often resulted in abandonment. In counseling, Ryan began to express his emotions and took risks with his aunt and uncle. He returned home to his family, where they have grown closer and continue to participate in counseling.

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Jenna, 17

Jenna was referred to Casa Youth Shelter by her therapist due to suicidal ideation, psychotic symptoms, and recent methamphetamine use. Jenna spoke of recent multiple sexual assaults by several different men in her neighborhood. She came to Casa on the eve of her 18th birthday. Jenna was at high risk for suicide, with all the variables in place: an upcoming event, her 18th birthday; a plan, to leave the shelter and run in front of a car or overdose on drugs; and the means, cars and drugs. Jenna told her therapist that, because of “voices” telling her to commit suicide, she would be unable to stop herself. Collaboratively, her therapist, the police, and the Crisis Assessment Team had her transported to a psychiatric hospital. Casa was an emergency safety net and succeeded in saving Jenna’s life.

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Jeffrey, 17

Jeffrey was referred to Casa due to problems at home, including a lack of personal hygiene, resistance to doing chores, impulsive and isolative behaviors, and conflicts that had become physically combative. Once at Casa, it became clear that Jeffrey's behavior indicated serious mental illness. His fear of bathing, paranoid delusions, and an inability to socialize indicated schizophrenia. It was possible that he would be homeless by his 18th birthday. Jeffrey's father was given information to get his son assessed at the hospital and, if necessary, held until appropriate placement options were secured. Jeffrey was eventually transferred to a long-term care facility and is being evaluated for appropriate foster care. His father is grateful for the support he and his son received from Casa Youth Shelter.

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David, 16

Reunited with his father at 14 years old, David began to have “meltdowns.” After receiving brief treatment for emotional and behavioral issues, he and his dad moved to California. Unable to find work, they fell into homelessness. David’s father brought him to Casa Youth Shelter to find some stability. David was given clothes from the donation closet; he said that the clothes were the “nicest clothes [he] ever had.” David loved to read books, but was unable because he didn’t have proper glasses. Casa staff worked with Target so his father could take him for a free eye exam and glasses. David was steady during his stay at Casa, and began to feel hopeful for the future. At his exit, David was looking forward to entering Job Corps or Sunburst Academy, both of which would provide him long-term stability until he turns 18.

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Armando, 17

As an undocumented Mexican citizen who came to California in pursuit of a better life, Armando found himself homeless. Living on the streets, he sought help from the Mexican Consulate. He wanted to go back to Mexico. The Consulate brought him to Casa Youth Shelter while travel arrangements were made. Together, Casa, Armando's family in Mexico, and the Mexican Consulate created a plan to help him return to Mexico. Armando experienced depression and anxiety about returning to his family in Mexico. At Casa, his counselor helped him with coping skills. Armando was thankful for the support and said that Casa was the only place he felt accepted since arriving in the U.S. At exit, he was happy and excited to return home. This truly embodies the mission and vision of Casa Youth Shelter.

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Joe, 15

When Joe and his family were evicted from their home, they lived in a park. Joe then dropped out of school. When his mother was able to get her car back, they “moved in” to the car. Depressed, Joe was desperate to not live in a car any longer. He often went hungry, or lived on chips and junk food. Joe searched for shelter online and found Casa Youth Shelter. Casa has provided him with new shoes, new clothing, and a warm bed. Joe and his mother have conflicts, and he wants to improve their relationship. His mother said that she is glad they have Casa until things can get better, and Joe said he is happy to be at Casa. He understands that he needs to follow the rules because he loves his cozy room, the home cooked meals, and the chance to talk to his counselor.

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Marta, 16

Marta's mother was drug-addicted and abusive. Marta was taken into protective custody at four years old, and she and her siblings were separated. By the time she was 12, she had been in 10 different foster homes. She was finally adopted and reunited with her siblings; however, there was significant conflict at home. Depressed, she began running away, cutting herself, and attempted suicide on five separate occasions. Once hospitalized, Marta was diagnosed with bipolar disorder. Marta came to Casa Youth Shelter hoping to learn better coping skills and to rebuild her relationship with her mother. During her stay at Casa, Marta was positive and engaged. She felt accepted and cared for. "I feel as if Casa gave me perspective as to what a real home and family are like. I feel more loved and cared for here than I have anywhere."

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Kevin, 16

Kevin was homeless, and his grandmother no longer wanted him. He was taken to a shelter in another county, but had difficulty there. He was withdrawn and non-compliant, and was ultimately asked to leave. Kevin's mental health issues created challenges: he had a psychotic disorder which made him paranoid and delusional, believing people hated him and wanted to hurt him. He was afraid to bathe or use cleaning products. With reassurance and support from Casa Youth Shelter staff, he not only was able to shower, he interacted with the other residents. His stay at Casa lasted 17 days, during which he celebrated his 17th birthday, and received his first ever birthday cake. He exited Casa with a stuffed animal he had made in the sewing group, which he said made him feel loved.

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