



## **San Diego Rapid Response Network Migrant Shelter Services | Formation & Foundation**

*The following is an excerpt from Jewish Family Service of San Diego's upcoming white paper on San Diego Rapid Response Network Migrant Shelter Services. The full white paper will be linked here when available, as well as published on [www.rapidresponsesd.org](http://www.rapidresponsesd.org) and [www.jfssd.org](http://www.jfssd.org).*

The San Diego Rapid Response Network (SDRRN) was originally founded in 2017, born out of conversations from numerous human rights, service and faith organizations, attorneys, civic leaders and community members all concerned that the results of the 2018 presidential election – and the subsequent start of the Trump Administration – would lead to unprecedented levels of immigration enforcement. As the conversations continued and concerns of mass deportations and family separations grew, the group began formalizing an alert and response system to potential interior enforcement activities, similar to other Rapid Response Networks that formed elsewhere throughout the country.

Today, SDRRN is a coalition of more than 40 participating organizations and individuals, led by core partners ACLU Foundation of San Diego & Imperial Counties, Jewish Family Service of San Diego (JFSSD), SEIU Local 221, and Southwestern College. San Diego Organizing Project (SDOP) was a founding core partner until 2022. The Farmworker Care Coalition was a core partner for several months in 2022 as well.

The network stands ready to respond to the needs of vulnerable immigrants and their families – advocating for their safety, providing emergency assistance, and coordinating pro bono legal representation, when possible, to defend against family separation and swift, unjust removal.

Since its inception, SDRRN has operated a hotline for community members to report immigration enforcement emergencies, such as checkpoints, raids, arrests and harassment. SDRRN also provides “Know Your Rights” educational materials, available for free in multiple languages on the [SDRRN website](#), so that immigrant families can better prepare and be informed on the rights available to every person in the United States, regardless of their immigration status.

### **Migrant Shelter Formation**

In October 2018, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) began releasing hundreds of migrant families onto San Diego's streets without warning and without following long-held travel process protocols, known as “Safe Release.” SDRRN was made aware of the situation after multiple calls to its immigration hotline from concerned citizens who reported seeing dozens of families at local transit stations with nothing more than the clothing on their backs and a clear lack of resources or knowledge on where to go or what to do next. These families, some with young children and babies, were being

placed in a situation that made them extremely vulnerable. If not for the formation of the migrant shelter, the already fragile homeless service providers in San Diego would have been further impacted.

Leveraging the emergency response system created during SDRRN's foundation, a respite shelter was quickly established to provide humanitarian aid for asylum seekers. This completely grassroots effort was only made possible by the donated time of countless staff and volunteers of SDRRN partner organizations who recognized the urgent, critical need that could not wait for action by local or state government leaders. SDRRN was also grateful to collaborate with other border states, relevant networks and providers to determine best practices and receive technical assistance for respite sheltering.

Operations continued this way until Gavin Newsom was elected governor of California, who visited the shelter in November 2019 and pledged his support upon taking office, at which time operations became more formalized.

Today, SDRRN Migrant Shelter Services is operated by JFSSD and continues to welcome migrants from around the world who are released to its care by DHS after being initially processed for their legal, human right to asylum. To date, SDRRN Migrant Shelter Services has assisted more than 142,000 people who would've otherwise been dumped by federal authorities in San Diego without food, shelter, transportation or resources.