



AGENCY HISTORY

Valley Oasis was incorporated in 1981 as The Antelope Valley Domestic Violence Council. In 1980, Michael D. Antonovich, Supervisor, 5th District, of Los Angeles County, created a task force to conduct a needs assessment to identify the services available for domestic violence victims. At the time, domestic violence was a social issue that had come into the spotlight due largely to the Feminist Movement. Domestic Violence Shelters were springing up all over the county. The Antelope Valley is located in the Northern High Desert area of the county and, during the 1980's was experiencing an inordinate amount of family violence. The task force that was established was called the Antelope Valley Domestic Violence Council. It was quickly determined that there was a great need for a domestic violence shelter in the region and through the supervisor's efforts, a long term lease was created.

Subsequent to approval of the lease, renovation of the property and granting of the non-profit status, the Valley Oasis Shelter opened up its doors on September 21, 1981. Since that time the shelter has served approximately 25,000 victims of domestic violence with emergency shelter and supportive services.

This property consists of eleven (11) cottages within approximately two and one-half acres of land. The shelter serves the entire Antelope Valley, as well as, north to Bakersfield and south to San Fernando Valley.

The shelter started with a meager budget of fifty-thousand dollars (\$50,000) through discretionary funds provided by the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors. Initially, the shelter consisted of one paid staff, 105 beds, making it the largest domestic violence shelter in the state of California, and one program, the emergency shelter. As more research was conducted with domestic violence victims the thought on services altered tremendously. The Board of Directors had the vision to develop and expand program services that would meet the needs of the clients. To be successful in this plan, they made the decision to reduce the number of shelter beds that would free up cottages so that new programs could be developed. The number of beds were reduced from 105 to 65 however, many new programs were implemented.

The agency was constantly reinventing itself based on the needs of the clients it served. Most clients came to the shelter with nothing; literally escaping violence with the clothing on their backs. They had no money and when trying to establish a new home for themselves, they did not have the means to purchase linens, glassware, plates, pots and pans etc. The agency had been accepting donations of clothing for years but decided to expand on this concept. On February 15, 1991 the Antelope Valley Domestic Violence Council opened the Valley Oasis Thrift Store. The thrift store not only provides a clearinghouse for donations for use by our clients it also provides the agency with an additional source of income.

Over the years the Antelope Valley Domestic Violence Council has grown by adding several programs that were needed to help and nurture victims of domestic violence and their families.

Over the next 13 years, the agency continued to expand. On July 1, 1997, the agency was funded for a 2-year on-site Transitional Housing program. The program has a fifty-six (56) bed capacity and has been able to provide transitional services to men, women and children of all ages. Since the opening of the Transitional Housing program it has served over 360 victims of domestic violence.

On July 1, 1998 the Agency opened the Cal-Works Case Management Program and Cal-Works Legal Clinic, components of the Counties Welfare to Work Program. The Cal-Works program is predominately for individuals in our community who are experiencing domestic violence. The program has grown to such large numbers that we offer individual, group and family therapy five (5) days per week. Since 1998 the Cal-Works program has served over 3,000 victims of domestic violence.

In 1999, with the demise of another local domestic violence shelter, the agency was asked to assume a current grant for the remaining funding cycle. Those residents were transferred to the Valley Oasis Shelter and provided with full support services.

On July 1, 1999 the Transitional Housing II was opened. The agency did so well, that when the funding ended, we were asked to continue with this program, and of course we said yes. The Transitional Housing II program is an off-site 2 year program, where individuals and families live in the own apartments and/or houses and are monitored closely by our trained staff members. Since 1999 the program has been able to assist over 100 families in living a safer and healthier life free of domestic violence.



The Children's Services provides childcare with specially trained staff members to guide the children while the parent is in group, off-grounds, in court, etc. The Children's Services has a strict daily activity agenda, which includes therapeutic art groups, quiet time, play time, homework tutoring and many other programs that have been designed, based on the age and unique needs of the child. The Children's Services has been in existence since the opening of the shelter, but has grown tremendously over the many years. The Children's Services was run by volunteers for the first year of the shelter's operation. Since that time, we have been able to staff paid individuals to care for the children.

With a reputation of being able to successfully operate programs that were failing, the Agency was requested to operate a transitional housing program in the City of Glendale. Freedom House opened in June 1, 2003. The Freedom House program has been designed to work like the other Transitional Housing programs in the Antelope Valley and was quite successful. In October of 2007, the agency turned the program over to a domestic violence agency within the City of Glendale.

The Agency was awarded a Capital Development grant in 2003. This award allowed for another extension of our many programs currently offered to victims of domestic violence.

Two new buildings were designed and built that offered safe haven to victims of domestic violence, but were also co-dependent on drugs or alcohol. The Genesis House Program opened its doors in June of 2004. The facility houses 19 men, women and children for a maximum of 3 months.

In October 2004, the agency was awarded a Child Abuse Treatment Program from the State of California to provide assessment and treatment services to children that have experienced abuse and violence in the home. The staff of Kayla's Place are trained the innovative Parent Child Interactive Treatment (PCIT) technique.

In January 2005, the Antelope Valley Domestic Violence Council was selected as the lead Agency for the Homeless Solutions Access Center. This program is a supportive services only project that provides supportive services to homeless families and individuals in the Antelope Valley. Its purpose is to assist individuals with basic needs and link them to the valley's homeless continuum for the permanent housing and the supportive services they need to put a permanent end to their homelessness.

In 2006, the agency celebrated 25 years of service by creating a D.B.A. changing the name to Valley Oasis. In addition to the name change the agency changed the logo, created a tag line and changed the mission and vision to reflect the agency's strong roots but also progressive nature. The agency proudly boasts that it has had only 6 executive directors during its' history and only two in the past 21 years. The current Chief Executive Officer has valiantly advocated for domestic violence victims, especially male victims. She has appeared on the Montel Williams Show, was Citizen of the Year in 2001 in the Antelope Valley, was Woman of the Year for Supervisory District 5 in 2000. She has been published in a book focusing on innovative treatment including the treatment of male victims in a domestic violence. The book was published in August of 2006. She has been a presenter at the International Conference on Family Violence for three years and served on a key note panel in 2006 at the same conference. A huge accomplishment for the agency was to sponsor Assembly Bill (AB958) which became law in January 2006 known as Peggy's Law.

In 2006, the agency partnered with the GLAD, an agency that provides services to the deaf community. The AVDVC was the only domestic violence agency willing to work with them on a project to provide services to victims of domestic violence who are deaf. The agency also partnered with Children's Bureau in writing a grant to identify and provide services to domestic violence victims with children under the age of five. This grant was awarded in January of 2006. And last but not least, the AVDVC wrote a grant with the A.V. School District to assist in identifying and providing services to homeless children.

After pioneering services to LGBT-Q in 2006 the agency proudly opened a shelter program specifically for LGBT-Q, one of four in the State. This program also focuses on changing policy in the Antelope Valley and helped create a LGBT-Q task force with the Antelope Valley College.

In 2007, the agency was awarded a research grant to open a child abuse prevention program. Strengthening Young Families has assisted young mothers with children under the age of 5 in learning child development and parenting resulting in a dramatic reduction in child abuse incidents.

Valley Oasis

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In 2008, the agency was awarded a grant to operate the failing sexual assault response services program. This program utilizes advocates to respond to the emergency room of local hospitals to advocate for sexual assault victims. This program has expanded to now include dating violence intervention and prevention in three high schools as well as developing and facilitating the "Strike Out Bullying" campaign. This program is a community based program focusing on eliminating bullying in sporting events.

The agency also partners with the Los Angeles County Sheriff Department in a first response program offering domestic violence advocacy to victims within 24 hours after the initial contact with law enforcement.

In 2010 the agency also became part of a collaborative effort teaming up Law Enforcement, DCFS and domestic violence advocates to respond to domestic violence calls but with the added emphasis of reducing the number of children that are taken away from the non-offending parent.

The agency plans to continue to provide services to the community and victims with the goal of eliminating violence.