

Casa Serena Marks Over 60 Years of Women's Addiction Treatment in Santa Barbara

Founded in 1959 as a home for women with nowhere else to go, the nonprofit now offers detox through lifetime aftercare in one Santa Barbara location.

SANTA BARBARA, CA, UNITED STATES, July 31, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Casa Serena opened in 1959 for a simple reason. There was no place in Santa Barbara for a woman with alcoholism to go for help, so Mildred Pinheiro, in recovery herself, made one. More than six decades later that same work continues in the same neighborhood, and the organization has grown into the only nonprofit women's treatment center in Santa Barbara that is both state licensed and Joint Commission accredited.

Casa Serena became a 501(c)(3) in 1973 and has since helped thousands of women recover from addiction to alcohol and drugs while managing co-occurring mental health conditions. The setting has not changed much either. Two Victorian homes sit in the heart of downtown Santa Barbara a few blocks from the ocean, with sizable bedrooms, private backyards, and vegetable and flower gardens. It reads more like a home than a facility, which is the point.

What has changed is the range of care. Women now move through every level of treatment in one place, starting with sub-acute and medically managed residential detox and continuing through women's residential treatment, partial hospitalization, intensive outpatient, standard outpatient, transitional living, and a lifetime aftercare program. Nobody has to change facilities or start over with a new clinical team as their needs shift, which is where a lot of women lose momentum in early recovery.

The program is women only by design. Addiction rarely shows up alone, so Casa Serena treats substance use, mental health, and eating disorders together rather than one at a time. Its [dual diagnosis treatment](#) addresses depression, bipolar disorder, anxiety and panic, ADHD, trauma and PTSD, grief and loss, and borderline personality disorder alongside the substance use itself, with psychiatric oversight from a medical director. Clinical work draws on DBT, CBT, ACT, trauma-informed therapy, and shame resiliency, delivered in 30, 60, and 90 day lengths of stay that get built around the individual woman.

Recovery also has to survive discharge, which is why the program includes job readiness training, continuing education support, parenting programs, and financial literacy alongside therapy. Garden therapy and a weekly culinary arts class round out the wellness side. Casa Serena

reports that 91 percent of its alumni are working or in school nine months after treatment.

As a nonprofit, Casa Serena puts its funding into treatment rather than returns, and financial aid is available for women with limited resources. Many major PPO plans are accepted and the admissions team verifies benefits confidentially, usually within a few minutes. Medicare, Medi-Cal, and Cen-Cal plans are not accepted at this time. Families are folded in as well through a family immersion program and family therapy, on the reasoning that a woman's support system either reinforces her recovery or works against it.

Sixty-seven years after Mildred Pinheiro opened the first house, the mission has not really moved. Women who need help still need somewhere to go, and Casa Serena is still that place.

About Casa Serena

Casa Serena is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit treatment center providing substance use, dual diagnosis, and eating disorder care for women in Santa Barbara, California. Founded in 1959, it is Santa Barbara's only licensed and Joint Commission accredited nonprofit residential treatment and rehab program for women, offering sub-acute and medical detox, residential treatment, PHP, IOP, outpatient care, transitional living, and lifetime aftercare. For more information, call or visit www.casaserena.org.

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