

2024

Strengthening  
Children, Adults,  
and Families:

# A Year in Review

FY 2024 Annual Report



EL CENTRO DE  
AMISTAD  
THE FRIENDSHIP CENTER  
[WWW.ECDA.ORG](http://WWW.ECDA.ORG)

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Dear Esteemed Members and Supporters,

Welcome to El Centro de Amistad (ECDA), founded in 1977 to address the needs of a demographic that had not been effectively reached before. Reflecting on the challenges our founders faced in launching an agency named in Spanish fills me with pride. Their courage and empathy in recognizing the community's needs was remarkable. This year, as in previous years, I have embarked on a journey to deepen my understanding of our rich history while we look forward to the future. I have had the privilege of meeting individuals who witnessed and contributed to our founding, and I am grateful for the insights they shared about those pivotal times.

Life's journeys and our experiences shape our unique paths, but what truly matters is traversing these paths together. As the young boy Miguel from the movie *Coco* wisely said, we must "Seize your moment."

At ECDA, we continue to work towards healing, strengthening, and helping people thrive. This year, we proudly opened two additional offices in Pacoima and Panorama City. The City of Los Angeles awarded us a FamilySource Center, which we successfully launched in a new location in Panorama City. Despite being a soft opening, we quickly transitioned from receiving the award to welcoming the community. Our successful partnerships and relationships have been crucial to ECDA's achievements. We are excited to continue this journey together, whether you are seeking support or are a dedicated staff member.

Muchas Gracias,



Luis Cervantes  
ECDA Executive Director



# Our History

An extraordinary milestone of securing a \$1 million contract aimed at delivering essential services to the youth of Canoga Park was reached following a meeting with two dedicated local advocates. Dr. Tomas Martinez, the visionary behind El Centro de Amistad, vividly reminisces about the agency's inception back in 1977. During that time, the community grappled with pressing challenges, including a surge in gang-related activities, which took a particularly heavy toll on the predominantly Latino families already burdened by unemployment, crime, poverty, and drug abuse. In response to these critical issues, concerned residents, with the invaluable support of San Fernando Mental Health Centers Inc. and their board of directors, united with Dr. Martinez to establish El Centro de Amistad.

Collaborating with Tarzana Treatment Center staff, they provided supervision for El Centro de Amistad's substance abuse services, guided by a community advisory board. In 1984, El Centro de Amistad Inc. officially became a non-profit with its own board of directors. With the backing of then-supervisor Michael Antonovich, the agency secured a \$68,000 contract from the Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health Services, offering community mental health outreach services and substance abuse treatment to at-risk, gang-involved youth.

Today, El Centro de Amistad has grown, employing over 100 staff members. Initially focused on at-risk, gang-involved youth with substance abuse services, their programs have expanded to provide comprehensive, culturally sensitive mental health services, including case management, medication support, counseling, and assessment, benefiting over 110,000 individuals.

The agency continues its commitment to serving children, youth, and empowering individuals for a brighter future, driven by the dedication of its board, staff, and the community.



## Our Mission

El Centro de Amistad, Inc., is a multilingual, cross-cultural organization providing a comprehensive range of mental health services, anticipating the ever-changing needs of families and individuals in the San Fernando Valley. El Centro de Amistad, Inc. is committed to assisting children, adults, and families.

*El Centro de Amistad, Inc. is a 501c(3) nonprofit organization whose mission is to provide a comprehensive range of mental health services to low-income families and individuals in the San Fernando Valley. El Centro de Amistad, Inc. is committed to assisting children, adults, and families.*

# Our Programs

## Department of Mental Health (DMH) Programs:

**Children and Adult Outpatient Programs** provide ongoing mental health services to individuals from birth to older adulthood. The goal of the Outpatient Program is to stabilize clients' mental health issues, make them more independent, and acquire healthier coping skills to function better socially, emotionally, and behaviorally within the home, work environment, school, and community settings. Services may include individual, family, group therapy, case management, rehabilitation, peer support, and medication support.

**Multidisciplinary Assessment Team (MAT) Program** is a collaboration between the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS), the Department of Mental Health (DMH), and community-based mental health provider agencies. It is designed to ensure the immediate and comprehensive assessments of children and youth entering out-of-home placement. The assessment is meant to help a family meet the needs that the child(ren) may have that place the family in danger of a lengthy separation.

**CalWORKS Program** provides mental health services, medication support, individualized employment services, case management, peer advocacy, and outreach to address mental health issues that are barriers to employment. Participants are over 18 years old and live and care for their children. Referrals are provided by the Department of Public Social Services (DPSS) GAIN Program.

## Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) Programs:

**Family Preservation (FP)** provides strength-based collaborative services aimed at helping families who are referred from DCFS to identify and build upon existing strengths; resolve child safety concerns; advocate for their children at school and in other public settings; and expand, or establish, the family's connection to resources and support in the community.

**Relative Home Assessment Services (RHAS)** is a family-friendly and child-centered caregiver approval process for children removed from their homes and in need of a safe placement with a relative caregiver. RHAS is a collaborative program between DCFS and ECDA which unifies approval standards for all caregivers, regardless of the child's case plan.

## Substance Abuse Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) Funded

**Infant & Early Childhood Mental Health (IECMH) Program** provides evidence-based mental health services to infants and children aged 0-12, focusing primarily on the 0-5 population.

Mental Health Consultation and training services are offered to 0-5 providers, the community, families, and mental health workers. The program's goal is to educate the community on 0-5 and childhood issues, enhance an infant's and child's mental health, improve social and emotional development, and reduce risk, particularly for those who have experienced trauma.

## FamilySource Center

**The FamilySource Center (FSC)** in Panorama City is a community hub offering social, educational, employment, and family support services. FSC aims to support low- and moderate-income parents and guardians with children up to the age of 17. FSC's mission is to help eligible LA City residents be on the pathway out of poverty; prepare low-income children and youth to graduate from high school and qualify for post-secondary education; provide safe, stable, and affordable housing services for those at risk of displacement; and financially empower low to moderate income City residents through asset building. Free Services Include:

- Multi-Benefit Screening
- Information and Referrals
- Case Management
- Financial Education and Coaching
- Income Tax Preparation
- Housing Advocacy & Limited Financial Assistance for Rental or Utility Arrears (separate application required)
- Mental Health Referrals
- Pre-Employment and Employment Support
- College Corner Mentoring/Tutoring
- Art and Cultural Activities
- Other Supportive Services (Immigration support, parenting classes, psycho-education, etc.)
- Civic Engagement

*\*Programs are geared toward low-income consumers. ECDA accepts Medi-Cal, Medi-Cal Expansion (MCE), and Managed Care Health Insurance Plan (MCHIP) coverage as applicable. Services are provided virtually, in the office, home, school, and community settings. - Limited funding is available for uninsured consumers*

# Our Services

All services are offered in English and Spanish and are subject to criteria and capacity.

**Mental Health** - Assessments, treatment planning, individual, family, and group therapy, collateral, and rehabilitative and Community Outreach Services (COS) are provided to qualifying consumers. Treatment is evidence-based and individualized according to symptoms, culture, situation, and age.

**Case Management** - Linkage and referrals, advocacy, and supportive services to access medical, educational, social, vocational, community, and rehabilitative needs are provided for qualifying consumers.

**School-Linked** - Mental health, case management, consultation, and supportive services are provided on-campus to students meeting criteria within specific contracted LAUSD and Charter schools within the San Fernando Valley.

**Medication Support** - Assessment, follow-up, and prescription of psychotropic medication services are provided by a licensed psychiatrist as needed to consumers who qualify for services.

**Peer Support** - An ECDA Peer Partner with lived mental health experience provides non-clinical strength-based support and advocacy to current ECDA consumers. Services include outreach and engagement, education and linkage to tools and resources, and other types of assistance.

**Employment Services** - Employment and training services to current and former CalWORKS recipients are provided by our Employment Specialist (ES). The ES also provides coaching support and assistance with setting short- and long-term employment goals.

**Family Preservation (FP) In-Home Outreach Counseling Services (IHOC)** - The FP IHOC provides counseling, parenting classes, child-focused activities, mentoring, case management, and teaching and demonstrating to program participants.

**Relative Home Assessment Services (RHAS)** - Comprehensive psychosocial assessment, home orientation/home environment check, and training are provided for all families in RHAS.

**Infant Massage (IM)** - IM is designed to provide short-term services for infants 0-6 months aimed to support the infant's development through caregiver bonding and attachment. Sessions are baby-driven; Caregivers are encouraged to respond to their infant's needs. Trained IM therapists focus on providing individual support to families affected by trauma.

**Free Legal Clinic** - ECDA's Legal Clinic is a privately funded program that provides free legal assistance in civil cases to ECDA clients.

**Mental Health Consultation** - A problem-solving and capacity-building intervention implemented within a collaborative relationship between a professional consultant with mental health expertise and one or more caregivers, typically an early care and education provider and/or family member. Early childhood mental health consultation aims to build the capacity (improve the ability) of staff, families, programs, and systems to prevent, identify, treat, and reduce the impact of mental health problems among children from birth to age 6 and their families. (Adapted from Cohen & Kaufmann, 2000)

**Training** - Our IECMH Program offers free training to the community on 0-5 age issues including Trauma, Child Development, Cultural Issues, etc.



# Supporting All Ages: Community Impact

Our providers  
deliver dedicated care  
to an average of 37 clients  
each year, conducting  
approximately

**1,020**

sessions per provider  
annually.

**1,566**

Relative Caregiver  
Training Hours  
provided to  
caregivers.

**22,528**

Mental Health  
Service hours  
provided  
to individuals  
and families.

**1,138**

Case Management  
hours provided to  
individuals and  
families.

**237**

Med Support  
hours provided to  
individuals and  
families.

**1,726**

Individuals, children, and families served.



# Real Lives, Real Impact:

## A Client's Success Story


### Empowerment Through the Family Preservation Program:

Laura, a 47-year-old Latina single mother of three, proudly completed the Family Preservation Program in September 2024 after being referred by the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) in April 2024. At the time of referral, she faced challenges with mental health, emotional stability, family stressors, and meeting court-mandated requirements. Motivated to improve family dynamics and fulfill these obligations, Laura actively addressed her open case concerns, health, and her children's safety and well-being.

Through the Family Preservation Program, Laura received comprehensive support, including in-home services, guidance, and structured assistance. Despite initial challenges, she showed exceptional progress, prioritizing her children's safety, attending regular therapy sessions, adhering to her medication plan, and committing to weekly in-home support visits. Her treatment team employed cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT), trauma-focused therapy, and parent-child interaction therapy (PCIT) to address both her emotional needs and her children's behavioral health.

Thanks to her dedication and partnership with the treatment team, Laura achieved significant milestones. Her progress included effective management of ADHD, strengthened family relationships, and a newfound sense of overall well-being. By consistently prioritizing her children's safety and development, Laura fostered a stable home environment and improved her parenting skills, creating a positive foundation for her children's growth.

Upon successfully completing the Family Preservation Program, DCFS recommended the closure of her case, acknowledging her compliance with court-mandated requirements, including her substance abuse and mental health services. Laura's remarkable journey highlights the impact of the Family Preservation Program; her commitment to open communication, collaborative problem-solving, and family well-being set her on a sustainable path forward. Discharged in September 2024, Laura leaves the program with confidence in her ability to maintain sobriety and a nurturing, stable home for her children.



● SCAN  
● HERE for  
● more of  
● our client's  
● success  
● stories.







# Making a Difference

For nearly five decades, El Centro de Amistad (ECDA) has been committed to enriching the lives of children, adults, and families throughout the San Fernando Valley by providing vital mental health services and family support. This enduring dedication reflects our core values and mission to make a lasting, positive impact within our community. Through community engagement and philanthropy, ECDA plays a pivotal role in addressing local needs, bridging gaps, and fostering a spirit of unity. Our giving-back initiatives create a caring and supportive environment, bringing hope and joy to those facing challenging circumstances.



## Back-to-School Event

One of El Centro de Amistad's key priorities is hosting events that strengthen our community. As National Back-to-School Month approached, ECDA held its annual back-to-school distribution event on August 4, 2023. The main goal was to gather enough supplies to support the children of ECDA families, ensuring they were equipped with the tools necessary for a successful academic year. School supplies play a vital role in a child's education, positively influencing their growth and development. Having access to these materials provides students with a sense of security and boosts their academic performance, while also helping parents better prepare their children for the school year ahead.

Thanks to the generous support of sponsors like the Perez family, ECDA staff, and the broader community, we were able to distribute over 150 backpacks filled with school essentials to families in need. Each ECDA child, along with their siblings, received the fundamental items required for the upcoming school year.

Distribution events were organized at both our East and West Valley offices, where parents and children expressed heartfelt gratitude for the donations. One parent shared, "These donations mean so much to us and have made a big difference in helping us prepare our kids for the new school year." El Centro de Amistad was overjoyed to witness the positive impact this event had on the families in our community.

# Making a Difference

## Thanksgiving Event

We are beyond thrilled to express our heartfelt thanks for the incredible support that made this year's Thanksgiving Food Drive an outstanding success! With the generosity of our amazing sponsors, partners, and community, we proudly provided a full Thanksgiving meal to 100 families from our Canoga Park and San Fernando locations. Each family received a beautiful holiday basket packed with non-perishable items and a \$50 grocery gift card to purchase a turkey.

This extraordinary achievement was made possible by the unwavering commitment of our dedicated ECDA team, Chaminade College Preparatory, SLTG, LLP, our Board Members, and the entire community. Your kindness brought comfort and joy to ECDA families, making the holiday season brighter for those who needed it most. Thank you for making such a meaningful difference!

## Adopt-A-Family Christmas Event

El Centro de Amistad hosted its annual heartwarming holiday event on December 14, 2023, for 75 local families as part of the "Adopt-A-Family" program. This initiative supported families navigating challenges such as low income, domestic violence, and other hardships. Thanks to the incredible generosity of the community, each family received thoughtful gifts, making a meaningful difference and bringing joy during the holiday season.





**2024 Virtual Conference**

**May 15, 2024**

**9:00 am - 12:00 pm**

3 Continuing Education Credits

**The event was held via ZOOM.**



# Grief & Loss

## Embracing Vulnerability:

*A Journey Towards Resilience and Healing*

**Presented by**

**Maria Williams, MA, LMFT**

### Learning Objectives:

- Participants reflected on their own experiences with grief.
- Participants were able to identify other factors exacerbating the loss.
- Participants identified different needs across the life span.
- Participants identified interventions to utilize with grieving people while maintaining a reflective and holding space.



Thank you for joining us for the 4th Annual Virtual Mental Health Conference, **Grief & Loss – Embracing Vulnerability: A Journey Towards Resilience and Healing**. This event was a profound exploration of the complex emotions surrounding grief and loss, offering attendees the opportunity to reflect deeply on these experiences, understand the many factors that shape our grief, and learn effective interventions to support individuals through their journey.

Led by seasoned mental health expert, Maria Williams, MA, LMFT, with both clinical and personal experience, the conference provided a comprehensive and enriching experience. Attendees engaged in insightful discussions on the intricacies of grief, exploring personal reflections and how external influences affect the grieving process. The event also highlighted various strategies and therapeutic interventions aimed at fostering resilience and healing among those experiencing loss.

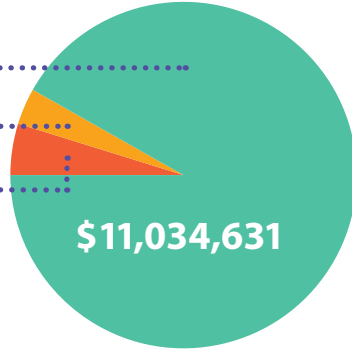
Held on Wednesday, May 15th, 2024, from 9:00 am to 12:00 pm (PST), the conference was streamed live via Zoom. Advanced registration was required to participate, ensuring attendees received their Livestream access link in advance.

The 2024 Mental Health Conference was designed for mental health professionals, caregivers, and individuals affected by grief, providing meaningful insights on topics including personal reflections on grief and loss, the diverse factors influencing grief experiences, and effective strategies for supporting individuals through the grieving process. Alongside the valuable knowledge shared, attendees had the chance to earn three hours of continuing education.

# 2023-2024 Financial Summary

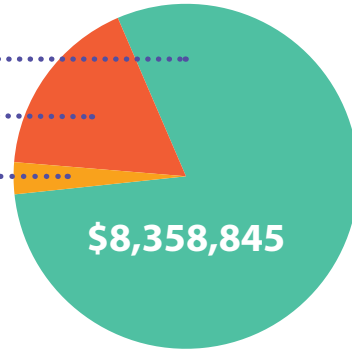
## Revenues and Other Support

Program Revenue	\$ 9,979,480
Philanthropic Revenue	\$ 409,170
Other Revenue	\$ 645,981
<b>Total Unrestricted Revenues</b>	<b>\$11,034,631</b>



## Expenses

Program	\$ 6,670,255
Management and Administration	\$ 1,439,159
Fundraising	\$ 249,431
<b>Total Unrestricted Expenses</b>	<b>\$8,358,845</b>



<b>Total Increase (decrease) in Unrestricted Net Assets</b>	<b>\$ 2,675,787</b>
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<b>Net Assets at Beginning of Year</b>	<b>\$ 3,942,363</b>
<b>Net Assets at End of Year</b>	<b>\$ 6,618,150</b>

# Meet Our Team



## Board of Directors

- Danitza Pantoja, *President*
- David Moreno, *Vice President*
- Doug Barnett, *Board Treasurer*
- Magali Gallegos, *Board Secretary*
- Justin J. Grooms, *Sargent at Arms*
- Enrique Sanchez, *Board Member*
- Juliana Ocegueda, *Board Member*
- Rich Golisch, *Board Member*

## Leadership Team

- Luis Cervantes, *Executive Director*
- Tania Fallert-Del Gatto, *Associate Director*
- Sara Pineda, *Director of Operations*

# Meet Our Associate Director

## Tania Fallert-Del Gatto

With over 25 years of dedicated experience in community mental health, Tania Fallert Del Gatto serves as a cornerstone of expertise and advocacy at El Centro de Amistad (ECDA). A Latinx bilingual (Spanish/English) Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist, Tania has dedicated her career to uplifting Latinx and other marginalized communities, including children and families, individuals affected by HIV/AIDS, and clients who have experienced trauma, grief, and loss. Trained in multiple evidence-based practices, Tania's extensive leadership, management, and administrative skills uniquely position her as both a clinician and a champion for mental health equity in the communities ECDA serves.

Currently, Tania serves as ECDA's Associate Director and Head of Service. ECDA is a non-profit organization committed to supporting at-risk families, youth, and adults in the Greater San Fernando Valley and surrounding areas, with a particular focus on serving the Latinx community. In her two-decade tenure at ECDA, Tania has played an integral role, providing direct client services, clinical supervision, and overseeing administrative and programmatic functions. Today, she is responsible for the management and oversight of ECDA's Department of Mental Health (DMH), Department of Child & Family Services (DCFS), Substance Abuse Mental Health Administrative Services (SAMHSA), and Family Source Center (FSC) programs.

Tania has witnessed remarkable growth and transformation at ECDA. Reflecting on her journey, she shares, "ECDA began as a small agency with just two offices and around 25 employees, delivering essential mental health and social services across the San Fernando Valley. Today, ECDA operates four offices, employs over 100 dedicated staff members, and receives diverse funding from County, City, and Federal grants." With the advent of virtual services and enhanced technology, ECDA now serves individuals not only locally but also across the county and beyond.

Tania's dedication to ECDA and her community shines as a testament to her unwavering commitment to mental health advocacy and equitable support for those in need.



# Meet Our Partners

We are deeply grateful for the steadfast support of our partners, whose commitment has helped us empower lives today for a brighter tomorrow. Their dedication to our mission has been crucial in expanding our reach to diverse communities, all united by the shared goal of prioritizing the mental health and well-being of those we serve.

In 2023, our community of partners flourished, and their collective efforts have transformed our mission into a powerful movement. Together, we are creating a future where mental health is prioritized, and individuals receive the care and support they need to live happier, healthier lives.

We extend our heartfelt thanks to all our partners for their invaluable contributions and unwavering commitment. Your support drives us forward on this journey of hope and healing.

## Donors & Partners

Albert & Elaine Borchard  
Foundation

Annenberg Foundation  
Assemblywoman Luz Rivas

Berkshire Hathaway Foundation  
Big Sunday

County of Los Angeles

California Community Foundation

California State University,  
Northridge

CalMHS

Capella University

Chase Bank

Cedars Sinai Foundation

Community Foundations of  
the Valley

Councilwoman Monica Rodriguez

Department of Children and  
Family Services

Grand Canyon University  
HealthNet

Joseph Drown Foundation  
Kroger Fresh For Everyone

LAUSD Board of Education

Los Angeles Department of  
Mental Health

National University

Our Lady of the Lake University

Pacific Oaks College

Pepperdine Graduate University

Phillips Graduate University

Pritzker Foster Care Initiative

Queenscare Foundation

Providence St. Joseph Foundation

SAMHSA

Ralph M. Parsons Foundation

San Jose State University

Sierra Health Foundation

S. Mark Taper Foundation

Skylight Foundation

SLTG, LLP

The Ahmanson Foundation

The California Wellness Foundation

The Ozzello Practice Law Firm

Toys for Tots

UMass Global

University of Southern California

Valley Presbyterian Hospital

Walmart Spark Good  
Foundation

Weingart Foundation

# Our Offices



**Canoga  
Park**

# Join Our Movement

Join Our Movement Supporting a non-profit mental health organization like El Centro de Amistad can profoundly uplift individuals and entire communities. Mental health issues affect many, including children, veterans, and those experiencing homelessness, who are particularly vulnerable. At El Centro de Amistad, we work to break the stigma surrounding mental health. Through educational workshops in schools, workplaces, and community spaces, we promote mental health awareness and equip people with tools for personal and community support.

Your donations allow us to continue these vital efforts—spreading awareness, educating, and establishing safe spaces for sharing, support, and healing. By joining us, you become a part of a movement to make mental health care accessible, reduce stigma, and foster a more compassionate, inclusive society. Together, we can change lives.



Give

Every gift matters. Your tax-deductible donation helps underserved communities receive essential mental health support. Donations of any size are impactful and appreciated. Donate now at <https://ecda.org/donation/>.

Connect  
and  
Share

Stay informed and engaged by subscribing to our newsletter, where we share valuable insights on mental health and updates on our impact. Connect with us on Facebook, follow us on Instagram and LinkedIn, and subscribe to our YouTube channel to join a growing community dedicated to mental wellness and inclusivity.

We deeply appreciate your commitment to mental health awareness and your partnership with our mission. Together, we are making a meaningful difference in the lives of those we serve. Thank you for your continued support!

Website [www.ecda.org](http://www.ecda.org)



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LinkedIn [El Centro de Amistad](https://www.linkedin.com/company/el-centro-de-amistad)



Instagram [@elcentrodeamistad](https://www.instagram.com/elcentrodeamistad)



YouTube [El Centro de Amistad Inc.](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC...)





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