



LAWSUIT AGAINST WOMEN'S SHELTERS DISMISSED A VICTORY FOR COMMON SENSE AND JUSTICE

The California Women's Law Center is delighted that common sense and justice prevailed today when the Los Angeles Superior Court dismissed a lawsuit against ten Southern California shelters for battered women and their children. The shelters are located in: Artesia, Canoga Park, Carson, Claremont, Glendale, Los Angeles, Newhall, Pasadena, and San Pedro.

The lawsuit, filed by representatives of the National Coalition of Free Men, claimed that the ten shelters engaged in unlawful sex discrimination by not accepting men at their emergency shelters for battered women and children. The California Women's Law Center and the law firm of O'Melveny & Myers LLP, representing a majority of the shelters *pro bono*, argued successfully that the lawsuit had no merit.

"This lawsuit should never have been filed in the first place. It's great news for our community and for battered women and their children that these ten shelters will be able to again focus all their resources on what's important: saving the lives of victims of domestic violence," said Marci Fukuroda, staff attorney at the California Women's Law Center.

California law (CA Government Code, Section 11135) states that no state-funded program shall discriminate against any person on the basis of "race, national origin, ethnic group identification, religion, age, sex, color or disability." Section 11139 of the law, however, clarifies that this prohibition against discrimination must not "be interpreted in a manner that would adversely affect lawful programs which benefit the disabled, the aged, minorities, and women." The shelters in question all receive state funding under the California Battered Women Shelter Program, a program created by the legislature in 1994 specifically to aid battered women and their children.

"Rainbow Services has chosen to address the massive societal problem of violence against women. Others are of course free to address other problems, whether it's violence against men, drug addiction, homelessness or something else," explained Ben Schirmer, Executive Director of Rainbow Services in San Pedro. "I wish the National Coalition of Free Men luck if they choose to establish services for battered men. In the meantime, Rainbow Services will continue to provide badly needed emergency shelter for battered women and their children."