



**CORA**  
**Executive Director**  
**Position Description**

***Painter Executive Search is supporting CORA in their search for an experienced Executive Director to lead the organization in leveraging its resources to increase impact and advance its mission.***

For 40 years, CORA’s mission has been to provide safety, support and healing for individuals who experience abuse in an intimate relationship and educate the community to break the cycle of domestic violence. CORA is the only agency in San Mateo County solely dedicated to serving survivors and is a key partner to dozens of government and community organizations working to improve the county’s coordinated response to domestic violence. CORA provides free, trauma-informed programming including safe houses and supportive housing; 24-hour crisis, legal, and law enforcement referral hotlines; legal services; mental health support; children's programming, community advocacy and education. Approaching survivors holistically, CORA’s services are designed to honor each person’s unique needs in their journey to overcome abuse.

Intimate partner abuse (IPA) is a significant and pervasive problem. In San Mateo County last year, CORA responded to over 12,000 requests for service. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates, one in four women and one in seven men experience IPA in their lifetimes. Nationally, as many as 10 million children witness IPA every year. Children raised in violent family environments also are at risk of becoming perpetrators or victims themselves during adolescence or adulthood. Domestic violence doesn’t discriminate. It’s class blind, color blind, and even gender blind. It affects everyone. Although CORA has grown significantly in the last decade, the need for these services still greatly exceeds the capacity of the organization.

In 2017, CORA engaged in a thoughtful strategic planning process which surfaced ideas for leveraging the strengths of the agency, considered where the need is highest and where the most impact could be made. Currently, there are task forces diving deeply into program responses looking for opportunities for more impact. The Strategic Plan points CORA to the “Domestic Violence Housing First” model as a potential approach toward freeing up resources while simultaneously achieving safety and stability for survivors. Expanding options for housing solutions is critical both because housing has been shown to promote long-term stability, safety and well-being for survivors, and also because housing is a significant obstacle due to the affordable-housing crisis experienced in the county and throughout the Bay Area. In the next year, CORA will further explore and pilot some of these ideas and continue to consider others that have been raised in this reflective process. The significance of these efforts represents a shift toward becoming a continuous learning organization which deeply engages data along with on-the-ground program expertise as it strives support people impacted by IPA in ways that most effectively create safety and long-term stability in their lives.

CORA has always been on the forefront of providing responsive, trauma-informed care to people experiencing IPA. CORA strives for equity in these services and is one of the few agencies of its type that provide services for all populations and communities, including men, those in the LGBTQ community, non-native speakers and

mobility challenged. CORA today reflects an excellence that has developed from 40 years of learning from dedicated staff members who passionately engage in supporting those affected by IPA at all stages of their journey. The future of CORA will be built with a recognition of the primacy of these interactions with clients and require continued evolution and applied learning as it seeks the most effective way to support the people impacted by IPA and disrupt the cycle of violence.

An efficient and financially sound agency, CORA has an annual operating budget of nearly \$5.5 million dollars that funds approximately 50 staff and programs in several locations across the county. CORA owns two buildings at its headquarters location, as well as two facilities for emergency and transitional housing. CORA has been managed capably and has a healthy balance sheet and cash reserve. Approximately 58% of CORA's annual revenue comes from government grants and contracts with the remainder raised through other sources including foundation and individual giving. CORA is an active and trusted collaborator and proactively works on policy change in coalitions at the local, regional, state, and national level.

### **POSITION SUMMARY**

The Executive Director (ED), reporting to the Board of Directors, will have overall responsibility for leading all aspects of CORA's programs and operations and engaging the staff and Board in developing the vision, strategy and operating plans to maximize CORA's capacity to fulfill its mission. Critical skills required for this role will be exemplary communication, comfort and experience in fundraising and partnership development, experience managing organizational growth and change, and keen resource management. The role will require an experienced leader who can engage in performance management while fostering the healthy communication and self-care required in this environment. The ED will steward and advance an internal culture that reflects the compassion, fortitude and hope that the agency holds for its clients. Working with staff who are often impacted by the secondary trauma of their clients' experience, this leader will need both vision and a very human engagement with the hard work of change.

The new Strategic Plan calls upon the organization to consider new models from outside the domestic violence sector and to determine if they can be adapted for greater impact within the sector. Leading CORA at this time, means exploring greater impact within a financially stable organization while honoring and acknowledging the learning of front-line staff. This leader will be responsible for increasing the capacity of the organization to share and learn from each other by creating transparent and shared decision-making that integrates and aligns the resources of the organization toward clear goals. Continued assessments of infrastructure and systems to support the work will be needed as the organization builds the data and technology solutions required for more flexible and dispersed services models.

The ED must be able to cultivate, build, and maintain strong and authentic relationships with a wide range of partners and community leaders including nonprofit executives, agency, government and elected leaders, law enforcement and the District Attorney's office, and funders. Honed communication skills including public speaking, written communications, and knowledge of public relations, social and traditional media skills will be beneficial in building visibility for the organization. Additionally, in light of the #MeToo movement and a general increase in visibility of the magnitude and impact of assault and gender inequity in the public sphere, CORA would value an ED who can leverage those opportunities for education and increased support.

Additionally, the ED will lead, inspire and support the Board of Directors. Working closely with the Board Chair, the ED will help to expand and strengthen the Board. The ED will create opportunities for deeper Board engagement through a more robust committee structure and increased fundraising activities. The ED is the primary face of CORA and is an important conduit of information to the Board about the needs within the county and new models emerging in the sector. Developing a strategic dialogue with the Board that will evolve a dynamic and sustainable future for the organization is welcome.

## HIGHLIGHTS AND HISTORY

### History

CORA began in 1977 as Casa de San Mateo, providing the county's only 24-hour crisis hotline. Over time, emergency shelter and transitionally housing was developed. In 1996, it incorporated prevention and education services and became the Center for Domestic Violence Prevention. In 2003, the organization merged with Sor Juana Ines, a community-based organization that addressed the unique needs of the Latina population, and formed CORA, Community Overcoming Relationship Abuse. Over forty years later, CORA continues to provide victims and survivors of intimate partner abuse with impactful, culturally-sensitive supportive services.

### Programs and Operations

CORA serves victims (i.e., persons currently in an abusive relationship) and survivors (i.e., persons who have left their abuser), and their children, residing in the county, as well as providing reciprocal services through a network of care in the region. CORA is the only agency of its kind in San Mateo County, a large, diverse and expensive county. Within the county, CORA often serves the most vulnerable populations, including those with limited English proficiency, lack of documentation, low-to-no income, racial/ethnic minorities and children.

Using trauma-informed practices, CORA responds to an average of 12,000 requests for help each year. Its services are bilingual in English and Spanish and include wrap-around programming in the following areas:

- **24-hour Crisis Hotline:** Crisis counseling, safety planning, shelter access, and referrals.
- **24-hour Emergency Response Program:** Law enforcement officers responding to a local 911 IPA call connect survivors with a bilingual CORA Crisis Counselor.
- **Safe Houses:** Emergency shelter for male or female survivors and their children.
- **Supportive Housing:** Up to six months of transitional housing and housing subsidies for up to three years to help survivors rebuild a violence-free life.
- **Legal Services:** Legal advocacy, representation, court accompaniment, and a legal hotline.
- **Mental Health Services:** Individual, family, and group therapy.
- **Children's Program:** Promoting healing from trauma, parent-child bonding, and family stability.
- **Community Advocacy:** Population-specific prevention, intervention and support for East Palo Alto, youth/teens (including those with special/sensory needs), the LGBTQ community, and those with limited English proficiency.
- **Community Education:** Trained facilitators educate the community on intimate partner abuse.

### Strategic Plan and Increasing Impact

In 2017, CORA embarked on a strategic planning process to address financial and organizational sustainability with attention on prioritizing resources to maximize impact. A general programmatic assessment was conducted, and their mission, vision and core values statements reviewed. The Strategic Plan was unusual in that it refrained from setting incremental change and specific goals, but rather looked to explore larger

questions about how the organization could grow and evolve to serve more effectively. CORA's 2017-2020 Strategic Plan, adopted by the Board of Directors in May 2017, set out a challenge: "CORA is the only DV agency in the county and has a moral obligation to allocate its limited resources to make the biggest impact on the need in the most cost-effective manner." The focus of the plan considered the loss or destabilization of housing as a key lever in regaining self-determination. An analysis of CORA's general operating funds showed that the majority of their unrestricted resources are currently directed to Safe House and Housing. These facts, when coupled, made it clear that answering the challenge to ensure that CORA's resources are well-aimed must include designing the best path forward for the housing programs.

This next phase of CORA's strategic development will be to test the assumptions, gather data, and experiment, all the while honoring their role in the community--not only to provide quality services, but to create safety, eliminate oppression, and leave behind a legacy of social change.

Within the backdrop of these questions raised through the Strategic Planning process, changes and additions to the personnel have occurred, including the addition of CORA's first Human Resource Officer. As the organization explores these ideas, increased cross-departmental communication and planning is developing. Fostering the communication, structure and transparency around these explorations and learnings will be important for future success.

## **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR ESSENTIAL DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

### **Leadership (Internal and External)**

- Provide vision and leadership to the Board and staff with an eye to innovation and a recognition of organizational capacity; foster change at an organizationally-appropriate rate and with the full engagement of the staff and Board;
- Be an effective and visible advocate for CORA and for those it serves; represent CORA to key partners and expand relationships with those in a position to support CORA's mission, impact and operations;
- Foster a culture that builds leadership across the organization; creates opportunities for learning, opens lines of communication, engenders trust and reflects CORA's values;
- Work to develop and execute specific plans to ensure CORA's long-term sustainability and maximize the current resources in pursuit of the mission;
- Actively collaborate with local and regional partners in strengthening the response to partner violence; become a voice and resource for trauma-informed and evidence-based practices including those from other service sectors that may hold promise for increased impact;
- Ensure CORA continues to be a reliable and quality-driven partner to law enforcement, emergency services providers, city and county agencies, other nonprofits serving the community and to the formal and informal coalitions serving the sector at large;
- Represent CORA in a way that embodies the organizational values; speak to the needs of the organization and the survivors of IPA in order to educate and influence a wide range of constituencies;
- Work closely with the Board to ensure the development of strong Board governance, establish clear lines of communication and organizational transparency; provide well-defined opportunities for Board and staff engagement;
- Assist the Board in the recruitment, selection and evaluation of board members and actively inform and engage the Board in issues of importance to the operations and strategy of the organization.

## **Operational, Program and Staff Management**

- Working with Human Resources, recruit, nurture and challenge a passionate, diverse professional staff; clearly delineate responsibilities with appropriate authority and establish accountability at the individual, team and organizational level;
- Lead ongoing development and improvement of organizational policies and practices; ensure rational reporting structures and infrastructure meets the needs of operations; practice strong performance management;
- Support and partner with Program leadership to ensure that programs are evaluated and continue to meet CORA's high standards for meeting client's needs; ensure growth is balanced with attention to the human and infrastructure capacity;
- Strengthen interdepartmental cooperation, develop organizational nimbleness and teamwork; honor the contributions of all staff and volunteers;
- Ensures internal leadership has the access to the tools, training and information required for managing their programs and areas of responsibility; encourage open and productive communication;
- Deepen the discussion and evaluation of pilot programs evolving from the strategic plan; ensure that change is welcomed as an opportunity for personal growth and is understood to further CORA's mission and impact;
- Working closely with the staff, prepare and present the annual budget to the Board for approval, oversee regular variance updates and reporting;
- Ensure that the organization's day-to-day operations and programs are smoothly and effectively administered;
- Report to the Board of Directors regularly on key information including the financial health of the organization, including financial results relative to budget, liquidity, and cash flow;
- Provide additional reporting as required to keep the Board appropriately informed of any significant change in financial or operational status; ensure organizational risks are well known and managed effectively.

## **Fundraising, Communication and Partnership Development**

- Be the chief advocate and external face of CORA; foster robust partnerships, steward new and prospective donors, educate and engage the public-at-large to further CORA's mission and meet the needs of the organization;
- Effectively and appropriately represent the organization and the impacts of domestic violence in the public media; be a compelling and passionate advocate for change;
- Actively work with fundraising leadership and the Board to meet the program and operating needs of CORA; grow and diversify CORA's base of support;
- Ensure that the Board is supported in its fundraising efforts, grow the Board's capacity and comfort in fundraising activities, and allocate appropriate staff time to sustain these efforts;
- Actively reach out to a wide range of constituents, including agency partners, philanthropic decision-makers, advisors, nonprofit partners, corporations and individuals to develop their support for the mission of CORA;

- Ensure the organization's fiscal sustainability by actively participating in fundraising including growing individual support through major donors, developing and maintaining key foundation relationships and critical contacts in local, regional, state and federal government and agencies;
- Oversee grant and contract administration and ensure compliance with all policies, legal and contractual obligations.

## **EXPERIENCE**

A successful ED candidate will likely have:

- Significant experience leading a similarly-sized nonprofit organization experiencing growth and change, ideally in a client-facing social service organization;
- Passion for equity and commitment to reducing the impact and occurrence of IPA;
- A history of strong collaboration; someone who actively seeks strategic partnerships and develops effective relationships; comfortable in diverse communities;
- An experienced and enthusiastic fundraiser who can effectively communicate the mission and actively develop and steward donors and key partnerships;
- A track record leading and implementing strategic plans, able to make decisions, execute strategically, and lead diverse teams in new directions;
- Demonstrated internal leadership and evidence of a management style that encourages open communication, collaboration, transparency and clear decision-making;
- Strong financial and organizational management skills; a track record of managing a lean budget and strengthening organizations operationally and financially;
- Experience as the face of an organization; well-developed interpersonal skills; approachable, with excellent oral and written communication skills; ideally with media experience;
- Experience fostering a strong culture where individual contributions are honored and respected and self-care is encouraged and exercised;
- Prior experience supporting Board development, governance and training;
- Ability to work well under pressure and adapt easily to changing situations and priorities; exercises good judgment; able to hear and value alternate opinions and make informed timely decisions;
- A strong commitment to diversity, inclusivity, and openness.

## **ATTRIBUTES**

- Forward-thinking; can exercise and foster enthusiasm for ideas and respect knowledge at all levels of the organization;
- A good listener and strategist; comfortable receiving input from many sources while retaining the ability to act decisively when required;
- Be a model of behavior exercising accountability, culturally sensitivity and self-care;
- A team builder with both vision and strong management skills; one who can motivate and direct diverse partners, grants authority and responsibility and shares success;
- Emotionally mature, someone who is both confident, approachable and who appropriately and regularly engages humor;
- Solutions-oriented; able to inspire possibility and retain attention on the requirements of execution;
- Inspires trust, creativity and cohesiveness;

- Resourceful—able to set priorities and respond to challenges creatively;
- Exercises the highest ethical and behavioral standards.

*CORA is proud to be an equal opportunity employer. They seek diversity with respect to race, color, age, sex, (including breastfeeding and medical conditions related to breastfeeding), religion (including religious dress or grooming practices), national origin, mental or physical disability, genetic characteristics and information, ancestry, marital status, family status, political belief, sexual orientation, gender (including gender identity and expression), medical condition, military, or veteran status or any other category or status protected by Federal, State or other applicable laws. All applicants are welcome. Individuals who are bilingual, people of color, members of the LGBTQ community and/or survivors of domestic violence are strongly encouraged to apply.*

*For roles with direct client contact, a California state mandated 40-hour domestic violence training is required. While not strictly required for this role, this training would be of great benefit to a new leader. CORA provides this training twice yearly.*

**For additional details or to submit your resume and cover letter for review, please contact;**

**Nancy Painter**

**[Nancy@painterexecutivesearch.com](mailto:Nancy@painterexecutivesearch.com)**

**(415) 202- 6240**