

Rodriguez to helm CALM as new executive director

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Despite a changing of the guard at CALM, a local nonprofit devoted to the prevention and treatment of child abuse in Santa Barbara County, the organization should suffer no decline in leadership.

Stepping in to replace Dr. Anna Kokotovic, who announced last year that she will retire as executive director in June after almost 20 years, is Cecilia Rodriguez, who has worked at CALM (Child Abuse Listening and Mediation) for more than 22 years, the last four as associate director.

During Dr. Kokotovic's tenure, CALM has grown from an outfit with a \$260,000 budget and 15 employees to one with a \$3.5 million budget and 56 staffers, not counting the interns, Dr. Kokotovic told the News-Press.

"I have worked with extraordinary staff and enjoyed strong community support," Dr. Kokotovic said. "I am confident that CALM will continue to reach the most vulnerable individuals and help give them the help they need to support their children and families."

Ms. Rodriguez will begin her new role on July 1. The Board of Trustees picked Ms. Rodriguez out of 200 applicants, some from as far away as Canada.

"Dr. Kokotovic is leaving a very strong and stable organization with a solid reputation in the community," Ms. Rodriguez said. "I hope to build



PHOTO COURTESY OF CALM

Dr. Anna Kokotovic, left, will retire in June after nearly 20 years of service to CALM. She will hand the reins over to Cecilia Rodriguez, right.

upon that stability and reputation by continually assessing the needs of the community and county, and growing CALM where we see the need for children and families."

Ms. Rodriguez is a licensed Marriage and Family Therapist who began her career with CALM in 1984 as its Child Abuse Prevention Educator.

She later developed many of CALM's critical treatment and prevention programs, including:

- the Intensive In-Home program, which provides individual and family therapy services to children and families in places and at times convenient for the family;

- the SPIRIT program, which provides 24/7 family-centered, community-oriented help to keep children and teens off the streets and successful in the community;

- and the HOPE program, which offers an array of therapeutic services

to children and parents in foster home and extended family home placements, according to the release.

Ms. Rodriguez also served as one of CALM's forensic interview specialists for over ten years.

After she retires, Dr. Kokotovic plans on going on a six-month sabbatical with her husband, she said. "After that, I hope to remain meaningfully involved in the community in ways where I can positively impact the lives of children and families in the county," she said.

CALM began in 1970, shortly after a young father under extreme stress killed his eight-week-old son, according to the agency's Website. "In response to that act, Claire Miles, a Santa Barbara nurse, launched CALM to reach stressed parents before they hurt their children."

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