

330 West Broadway
San Diego, CA 92101
(619) 531-4040

SanDiegoDA.com

OFFICE OF
THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY
COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO

SUMMER STEPHAN
DISTRICT ATTORNEY

DWAIN D. WOODLEY
ASSISTANT DISTRICT ATTORNEY

November 4, 2021
For Immediate Release

Contact: [Steve Walker](#) (619) 531-3890
[Tanya Sierra](#) (619) 531-3315
En Español [Barbara Medina](#) (619) 531-3305

Las Colinas Nurse Charged with Manslaughter in Inmate Death

The San Diego County District Attorney's Office has charged Danalee Pascua, 36, a nurse at the Las Colinas Detention Facility, with Involuntary Manslaughter, a felony violation of Penal Code Section 192(b), in connection with the death of Elisa Serna, 24. Serna died on November 11, 2019 while in custody at the detention facility. Arraignment is scheduled for November 18 at 1:30 p.m. in East County. If convicted, Pascua faces up to four years in prison. There is an ongoing investigation in this case reviewing other parties who may also be criminally responsible.

On November 10, 2019, Ms. Serna reported that she was dizzy and nauseous and was moved into the Medical Observation Unit of the Las Colinas Detention Facility. The next day, the defendant responded to Serna's medical isolation cell in an attempt to take Serna's vitals. Serna fell in the defendant's presence. The defendant failed to get Serna's vitals, did not move Serna into a recovery position and left Serna on the ground in the cell. About an hour later, Pascua and deputies returned to Ms. Serna's cell and began futile life saving measures.

The San Diego County Sheriff's Department referred their investigation to our office for review. The Special Operations Division of the DA's Office, a dedicated unit of prosecutors and investigators that review officer-involved shootings and in-custody deaths involving criminal wrongdoing, is handling this case.

District Attorney Summer Stephan released the following statement:

“There is nothing more sacred than the sanctity of life and when that life is in the custody and care of government, it must be safeguarded and provided with the appropriate medical care. The evidence in the in-custody death of Elisa Serna demonstrates criminal negligence that contributed to her death. It is a heartbreaking case of failure to safeguard Elisa's life by those who are charged with that responsibility. Our analysis in this case as in any case follows the law, is independent and objective. In this particular incident, we can only file charges against the individuals involved if it is determined there is criminal negligence beyond a reasonable doubt. Other systems such as civil actions, administrative sanctions and citizen review boards provide wider remedies without the very high burden of proof of criminal accountability.”

###

About the San Diego County District Attorney's Office

The San Diego County DA's Office prosecutes all felony crimes in the county and misdemeanor crimes committed outside the City of San Diego. The office files about 40,000 criminal cases a year and balances prosecution with numerous crime prevention programs. District Attorney Summer Stephan leads the office of more than 1,000 dedicated employees who pursue fair and equal justice, and support victims daily across San Diego County.