



# Santa Barbara County Sheriff's Office

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## News Release

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### Sheriff's Office Investigation Leads to Arrest of Two Employees

**Santa Barbara, Calif.** – This morning, Sheriff's Office detectives arrested two employees for suspected crimes committed against inmates while they were in custody. The arrests stem from a lengthy investigation that began in August 2018, with a report from an inmate. In the months that followed, the Sheriff's Office initiated an internal investigation of two employees that subsequently developed into two separate criminal investigations. The investigations were for criminal activities that occurred around the same time with intertwined witnesses.

The suspect in one case is 34-year-old Salvador Vargas of Santa Maria, who was hired in April 2018, as a Social Worker and was assigned to the Main Jail as a Discharge Planner. The suspect in the second case is 47-year-old Gabriel Castro of Ventura, who was hired in July 2002, and worked as a Custody Deputy at the Main Jail. Both suspects have been on administrative leave since September 2018.

During the investigations, detectives identified an extensive list of possible witnesses and attempted to identify additional potential victims. This follow-up required interviews of numerous inmates, some of whom had been transferred to custody facilities throughout the state. The investigations for both individuals were turned over to the Office of the Santa Barbara County District Attorney in September 2019, for their review. The District Attorney's Office filed charges on February 20, 2020, and arrest warrants were issued on that day for both suspects.

Vargas was arrested at his home today and was booked at the Santa Barbara County Jail on a warrant for forcible oral copulation (felony), and sexual activity with a person in custody (felony) with a bail amount of \$100,000.

Castro surrendered to detectives today at the Ventura County Jail and was booked on a warrant for forcible sexual penetration by a foreign object (felony), and sexual activity with a person in custody (felony) with a bail amount of \$100,000.

The Sheriff's Office is dedicated to thoroughly investigating allegations of misconduct by employees and does not tolerate the victimization of inmates who are entrusted in our care. The alleged actions of these employees violate the Core Values of the Sheriff's Office, in addition to the law, and are intolerable.

Anyone with any information relating to these investigations is asked to please contact the Sheriff's Criminal Investigation Division at (805) 681-4150.



Gabriel Castro



Salvador Vargas

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