



Pay Equity

Domestic violence service agencies are called to provide expanded services to survivors without increased wages for service providers to ensure client needs are adequately met. Service providers provide essential services such as crisis intervention, counseling, and emergency housing assistance. Yet, service providers are not ensured a living wage to meet their own basic needs. A **\$5 million increase in statewide funding for domestic violence services** through GRF funding would allow for an increased investment in the workers who provide essential services to create safer communities throughout the state of Illinois.

Who are Domestic Violence Service Providers?

- Primarily women, from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds
- National data estimates more than 50 % of service providers are survivors of interpersonal violence themselves¹
- Staff largely reflect the backgrounds of the survivors they serve

Human service worker turnover rates range between 30 - 50% primarily attributed to low wages & high occupational stress¹

Ensuring Living Wages for Service Providers

- Service providing agencies report limited resources and funding pre-pandemic, yet workers have been expected to accommodate increased survivors needs with little to no additional funding
- Staff are experiencing increased financial hardships, with approximately 1/3 of providers reporting decreased household financial stability during COVID-19 pandemic¹
- Service providers are highly skilled and educated yet underpaid, with the majority of Domestic Violence Advocates earning less than \$40k annually while providing critical crisis intervention services²
- Compared to private counselors who provide similar crisis services and counseling, DV Counselors are significantly underpaid and overworked due to high caseloads
- High turnover rates require agencies to use limited funding for overtime hours and additional training for on-boarding of new staff

When service providers' cost of living needs are met, burnout and rates of secondary traumatic stress are reduced¹. Investing in service providers means increasing the capacity of domestic violence organizations to continue providing essential, quality services.

1) *On the Front Lines of the COVID-19 Pandemic: Occupational Experiences of the Intimate Partner Violence and Sexual Assault Workforce* (Wood et al., 2020). Journal of Interpersonal Violence.

2) Multiple Sources - (Bureau of Labor Statistics, Human Services Edu, Glassdoor, Nonprofit Quarterly, Payscale)

COVID-19 Impacts on Service Provision

Domestic violence organizations across the nation have witnessed an increase in domestic violence cases during the COVID-19 pandemic. These increases are not a new phenomenon. During crises such as Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, domestic violence and sexual assault service providers witnessed an increased need for services for over a year after the initial crises³.

Potential long-term impacts of the current COVID-19 crisis include:

- Effects of violence exposure during lockdown on both survivors and children witnesses, increasing mental health costs and need for expanded services
- Increased need for temporary and affordable housing due to isolation from community support systems
- Communities of color, immigrant communities, and people with disabilities experience disproportionate risks regarding domestic violence and sexual assault as well as COVID-19

IL Statewide Domestic
Violence Hotline

+2,000%

increase in texts
received

+15%

increase in calls
received

Rising rates of domestic violence during the COVID-19 pandemic due to increased economic hardships & isolation³

Maintaining Adapted Service Provisions Beyond COVID-19

To answer the call for adapted service provisions, agencies have integrated new technology methods to provide virtual service delivery. Beyond COVID-19, these service provisions provide a critical tool to reach marginalized victims of domestic violence such as people with disabilities and chronic illnesses who may have limited access to in-person services. The pandemic has reinforced the need for domestic violence services to shift over time. Service providers have risen to the occasion creating new ways to serve clients, however these changes cannot be sustained without additional funding.

Expanded funding will provide for:

- Addressing the increased need for anti-oppressive services by providing culturally appropriate interventions for communities of color, immigrants, and people with disabilities
- Secure staff laptops for remote work and enhanced security software to ensure confidentiality during virtual services
- Increased outreach to communities to support resource connection & prevention education
- New technology systems to increase remote access to reporting and safety planning services
- Longer-term funding for rent, utility, and food assistance

³ Covid-19 and Domestic Violence: an Indirect Path to Social and Economic Crisis (Sharma & Borah, 2020). US National Library of Medicine.