



2022 POLICY & ADVOCACY PRIORITIES

LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

Amend the Juvenile Court Act

Survivors are frequently involved with the family regulation system in investigations against the person causing harm or facing investigations themselves due to violence occurring in the home. The Network supports amending the Juvenile Court Act to create a less punitive system against survivors that is more trauma-informed and cognizant of the dynamics of gender-based violence. This work also includes increasing advocacy for child survivors who may require additional or unique supports, protections, and resources.

Improve Economic Equity and Access to Benefits

The Illinois Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program currently offers a Domestic Violence Exclusion under the federal Family Violence Option to waive work and time requirements for survivors. Yet, the application process is characterized by distrust in confidentiality and requires proof of experiencing violence. These issues hinder survivors from accessing these critical benefits. The Network supports amending TANF policy to allow for a sworn statement by the survivor to be sufficient evidence and strengthen confidentiality protocols. The Network also supports other improvements to the program and economic justice advocacy such as creating survivor-specific benefits, pay equity, and other resources.

Evaluate and Explore Criminal Justice Reform Legislation

The Network supports potential reforms to the criminal justice system that would address issues plaguing criminalized and system-involved survivors. This may include amending statute language and parole procedures to include a comprehensive understanding of gender-based violence and the unique experience of survivors.

ADVOCACY PRIORITIES

Culturally Specific Services/Language Access

Intersectional survivors experience compounding barriers and challenges to achieving safety and seeking services. In order to meet their diverse needs, the Network advocates for expansion and support of culturally specific services and language access to provide these resources and create an inclusive and responsive environment to receive help.



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ADVOCACY PRIORITIES CONTINUED

Non-Law Enforcement Crisis Response

The Network supports the development of a non-police crisis response to gender-based violence for survivors who do not use law enforcement. Many survivor services rely on law enforcement as the primary intervention response to interpersonal violence. However, police involvement can also escalate and exacerbate these situations. Despite efforts to reform this system, law enforcement interventions can place survivors at a greater risk for harm while also perpetuating structural inequalities that limit future support.

Given survivors' underutilization of these traditional systems, support for the development of an alternative to the police would help expand what supportive options are available to all survivors. The Network will work in coalition with community stakeholders and the City of Chicago to create a program that is independent of law enforcement involvement and responsive to the needs of survivors.

Continuing Advocacy for Criminalized Survivors

Survivors seeking help from carceral systems such as law enforcement may face criminalization themselves as a result. Moreover, research highlights the prevalence of a history of experiencing gender-based-violence violence by female-identifying people who experience incarceration. In particular, women of color, transgender and gender-nonconforming individuals, as well as many others who deviate from racialized gender norms are criminalized at a disproportionate rate. The Network will continue its advocacy to better inform carceral systems of the impacts of experiencing violence and provide research and support for survivors who are charged with crimes.

Cook County/Chicago Court Advocacy

Many survivors still rely on the legal system to access protection and remedies. The Network will continue its court advocacy work that has yielded momentum in increased funding, implementation of a 24/7 order of protection program, and ensuring appropriate legal staff are in place to handle survivor needs. The Network will maintain its partnership with court professionals to further address the accessibility and resources needs of survivors.

Expanding Access to Resources & Basic Needs

Survivors encounter several barriers to seeking safety and fleeing harm. These barriers persist even after fleeing as survivors frequently lack access to housing and economic stability. The Network, through its newly created Housing Advocacy department and other advocacy efforts, will work to expand access to basic needs for survivors. This includes advocating for more transitional and permanent housing options and removing obstacles to receiving public benefits.



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BUDGET ADVOCACY PRIORITIES

City of Chicago

The recent passage of the 2022 City of Chicago Budget marks a historic step in addressing the needs of survivors and service providers. The budget includes \$35 million with \$25 million in new funds for emergency financial assistance, legal services, prevention education, housing vouchers, and children's services. In order to ensure this funding is allocated efficiently and appropriately, the Network will collaborate on the implementation of these funds and the Strategic Plan to Address Gender-Based Violence. This will also include advocacy for increased funding and revenue in future years.

State of Illinois

With the recent local victory in the 2022 City of Chicago Budget, the Network hopes to see a similar increase in funding for gender-based violence at the state level. State funding allows for greater flexibility and the ability to tailor allocation to the specific needs of survivors in Illinois. The Network will continue to push to avoid cuts and advocate for increased funding to meet the high need for services throughout the state.

The Network advocates alongside the Illinois Coalition Against Domestic Violence and other gender-based violence organizations to support practical, survivor-based approaches that help to build better system responses to problems. Some of the recommendations to address the gaps in services and resources of survivors are outlined in The Network's [2020 Measuring Safety: Gender-Based Violence in Illinois](#) report.
