Executive Summary
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Annually, the Network: Advocating Against Domestic Violence (The Network) publishes a report to assess the documented instances of domestic and gender-based violence and responding service provision in Illinois. The Network gathers experiences from survivors of domestic and gender-based violence, collects quantitative data from public sector agencies tasked with responding to domestic and gender-based violence, and includes quantitative and qualitative information from service providers on what is needed and what is working well.

The goal of each annual report is to learn from survivors and providers about the nature of violence, the gaps in services and systems, and the steps needed to repair harm as well as prevent further violence.

Survivors of gender-based violence seek help from a variety of community-based and/or systemic supports. This report analyzes survivors’ interactions with each of these systems, highlighting areas where systems need improvement to effectively support survivors.

However, the primary focus of the 2021 Measuring Safety data report is to provide a blueprint for public and private stakeholders to invest in services that increase safety for survivors. By focusing our attention on what is working well for the most vulnerable, we hope to guide the sector into increased, impactful investments in our future.
KEY TAKEAWAYS:

Need for Assistance Remains High.
The Illinois Domestic Violence Hotline received 32,363 contacts in 2021, a 9% increase from 2020. This increase was seen across the state, with many counties receiving substantially higher increases in contacts.¹

Simultaneously, overall violence rates increased in Chicago. In 2021, there were 121 domestic violence related shootings recorded by CPD, a 64% increase from 2020.² More survivors received services, though rates remained below pre-COVID levels.³

Survivors & Criminal and Legal Response Systems
The report analyzes survivors’ experiences with law enforcement, the legal system, the family regulation system, government assistance programs, and services from private providers. Calls to the Chicago Police Department decreased from 2020 to 2021 by 5%.⁴ This aligned with negative experiences with law enforcement reported by many of the survivors who were interviewed.⁵ Survivors predominantly utilized the legal system for access to orders of protection, as survivors faced challenges accessing other legal remedies.⁶ Survivor involvement with the family regulation system increased, creating challenges for many families.⁷

Housing & Public Benefit Programs
The report examines subsidized housing and public benefit programs, demonstrating the barriers to accessing these resources and the severe underutilization. In 2021, only 34 individuals in Illinois received a family violence waiver for Temporary Assistance for Needy Families.⁸

Private Providers
Lastly, the report examines the services offered by private providers, such as non-gender-based violence associated legal firms and counseling services. In addition to the increased costs of these programs, survivors who were interviewed highlighted that these providers did not have the same expertise as the gender-based violence service organizations.⁹
Programming

Many programs offered by gender-based violence service providers that have demonstrated effectiveness in working with survivors of gender-based violence are highlighted in this report. These include:

- Programs for children
- Housing programs
- Economic needs programs
- Health & wellness programs
- Community-building programs

Within each of these, there are multiple program models provided that can be utilized to serve survivors. Each program works to address some of the top needs of survivors.

Programs for Children

In 2021, 94% of Illinois contacts to the IL DV Hotline that provided victims’ dependent information reported that the survivor had dependents, indicating the high need for children to also receive services.  

Housing Programs

Similarly, survivors consistently reported a need for housing. While requests from Illinois contacts for shelter through the IL DV Hotline decreased by almost 8% from 2020, requests for affordable and transitional housing services drastically increased by 62%.

Economic Self-Sufficiency Programs

Many survivors served by gender-based violence service providers had little to no income, with a 56% increase in survivors relying on unemployment insurance from 2020 to 2021.

Health & Wellness Programs

While healthcare needs are harder to track due to limitations with medical data, survivors who utilized hospital-based programs spoke to the importance of being able to connect with service providers in these settings, reflecting that they would not have known what services were available if they had not been connected in the hospital.

Community Building Programs

Lastly, survivors consistently reported feelings of isolation. Accordingly, the report closes the program overview with ways that service providers facilitate community connections amongst survivors.
The Report Concludes With the Following Recommendations

**Sustain Increased Financial Investments in Direct Services**

The City of Chicago and State of Illinois recently made new investments in services for gender-based violence which will help service providers expand and improve their programs. These increased investments must be sustained and built on moving forward.

**Increase Awareness of, and Connection to, Community-Based Resources**

Many survivors reported being unaware of the services available. It is vital that awareness of these resources is raised so survivors can access the services they need.

**Increase Gender Based Violence Data Collection and Availability**

Many factors connected to gender-based violence are still unknown due to limited data collection. The Network encourages those within all systems who interact with survivors to accurately record information from these interactions that can be utilized for research.

**Prioritize Gender-Based Violence Services Over Other Systems of Response**

As this report highlights, the majority of survivors receive the strongest support from direct service providers. As officials look to address increasing rates of gender-based violence, emphasis must be placed on these service providers which continue to provide a positive impact on survivors.