

The Need for Gender-Based Violence Funding

The need for gender-based violence services remains high. Calls to the Illinois Domestic Violence Hotline have been steadily rising over the past several years. In 2021, over 32,000 individuals contacted the hotline. These contacts demonstrate the persistent need for gender-based violence services such as legal advocacy, affordable housing, and counseling. This upward trend has continued in 2022. This year the hotline saw a record-breaking number of calls in a single day. [1]

The need for services is also exemplified in the high rates of shootings and homicides related to domestic violence in the City of Chicago. In 2021 there was a 64% increase in domestic violence-related shootings throughout the City. Much like calls to the hotline, shooting rates have remained alarmingly high in 2022. [2] Unfortunately, the persistently high shooting rates demonstrate that the underlying violence has yet to be addressed despite City efforts to address gender-based violence.

The ongoing needs of survivors cannot be met without additional program funding.

The Network —united with member organizations and advocates—requests an increase in ongoing grant programs by 20% through general funding and a continuation of ARPA-funded programs through general funding.

Service providers cannot provide adequate care to survivors without funding that allows for staff raises. Providing staff a thriving wage will avoid staff turnover and help to maintain a skilled workforce, but requires additional investments.

Domestic violence advocates are primarily women and often come from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds. Additionally, national data estimates that more than 50 % of service providers are survivors of interpersonal violence themselves.[3] They are highly skilled workers, frequently with advanced degrees, yet they earn salaries significantly lower than market rates.

Advocates have gone years without raises, earning only minimum wage or close to it despite being highly educated and dedicated to the work. Recent funding increases at the state level allowed some providers to provide raises which advocates cried upon receiving, but this is only the first step in getting advocates the wages they deserve.

1) Author analysis of Illinois Domestic Violence Hotline Data obtained through the internal database, iCarol, April, 2022.

2) Data provided by the Chicago Police Department, Strategic Initiatives Division, Data Analytics Unit through a Freedom of Information Act request, March, 2022

3) 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.



Need for Efficient Funding Procedures

Investments in funding for gender-based violence services are of vital importance, but the need for these funds to be accessible and efficiently dispersed is of equal importance.

The Chicago Recovery Plan committed more than \$2.5 billion to lift up the community, a massive undertaking. While the City has diligently worked to build out personnel and foundational support for these funds, the process has been challenging for service providers in need of funding.

Certain programs have been prioritized and have begun receiving funds. However, the gender-based violence programs are still working to finalize contracts that they will then have to renew in January, with only a small selection of programs just now beginning to receive funds.

These administrative burdens and delays in disbursing funds lead to delays in service, meaning continuing days with no shelters available in Chicago and survivors on waitlists for assistance. These issues are particularly damaging to smaller organizations that do not have the capacity to float the funds until they receive payments from the City.

The Network recognizes the challenge faced by the City in managing this substantial investment but believe that re-evaluating procedures to streamline processes and create more efficiency will not only help service providers receive funds quicker but will decrease the burden on City officials.

Key Recommendations:

- Allow for multi-year contracts for the remaining ARPA funds.
- Increase collaboration across City entities, including the City Council, City administration, and the Office of Budget Management, to improve efficiency in fund disbursement.
- Prioritization of gender-based violence services within budget management.

The Network calls on the City Government to evaluate current procedures, and personnel needs to improve efficiency in providing vital funds to address gender-based violence.



The Network
ADVOCATING AGAINST
DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Framework for Responsive Funding

Additional funding in a line item of the budget would enable providers to sustain the shifts in services that benefitted survivors during the pandemic, along with expanding services to address the multiple safety challenges faced by families in Chicago.

The Network refers to the recommended framework from the previous year's budget advocacy, as the needs of service providers and survivors remain the same. The City must provide funds that can be easily accessed and quickly dispersed to support ongoing services and prevention needs.

