

MEASURING SAFETY
Gender-Based Violence in Illinois 2025
Volume 1

ILLINOIS DOMESTIC VIOLENCE HOTLINE REPORT

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The Network: Advocating Against Domestic Violence

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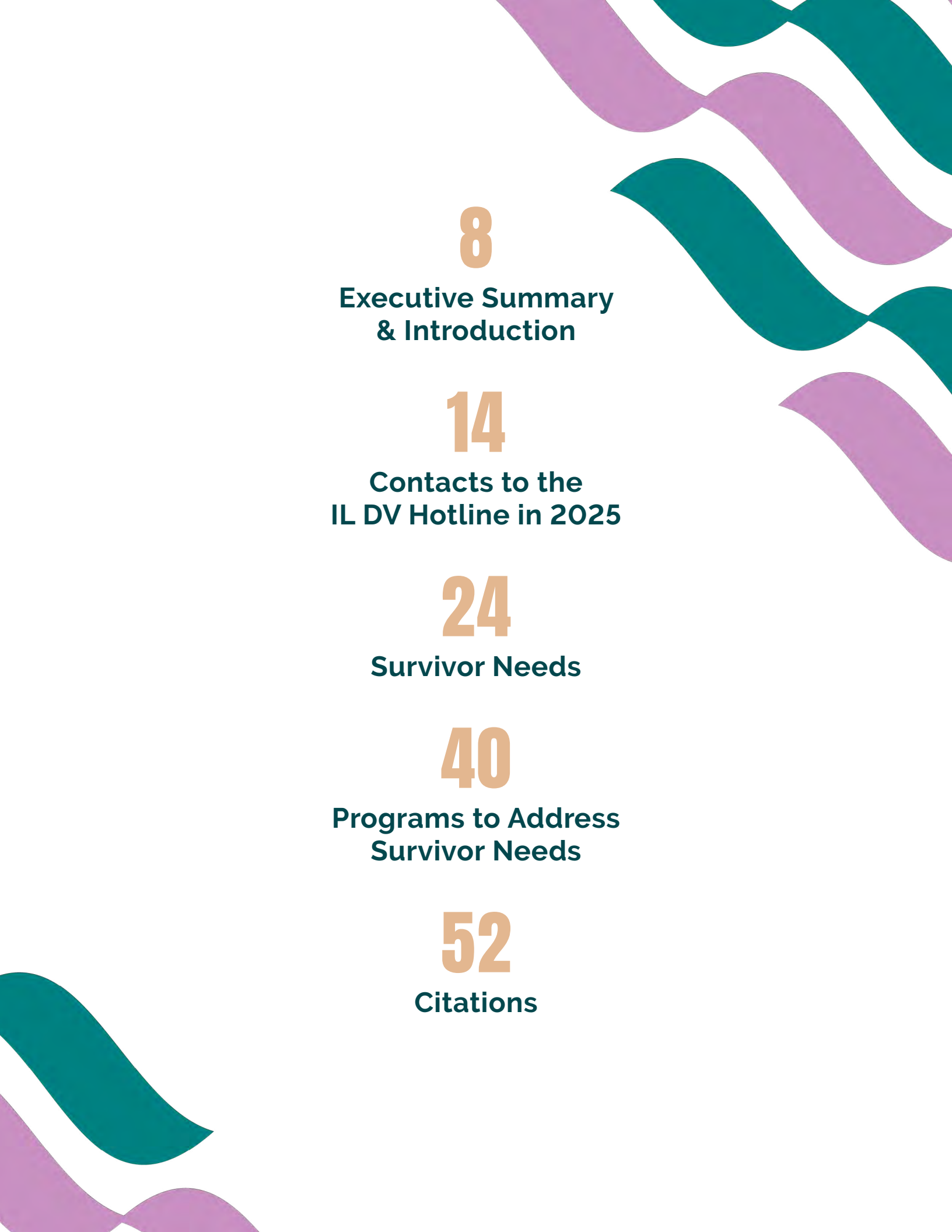
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THANK YOU TO THE STAFF AT THE ILLINOIS DOMESTIC VIOLENCE HOTLINE

for their dedication to serving survivors at every hour of every day. Their skill, compassion, and commitment to excellence ensure that survivors across Illinois are connected to the information and services they seek. The data they collect from each call serves as the foundation of this report and their stories bring survivor experiences to life.

TABLE OF CONTENTS





8

**Executive Summary
& Introduction**

14

**Contacts to the
IL DV Hotline in 2025**

24

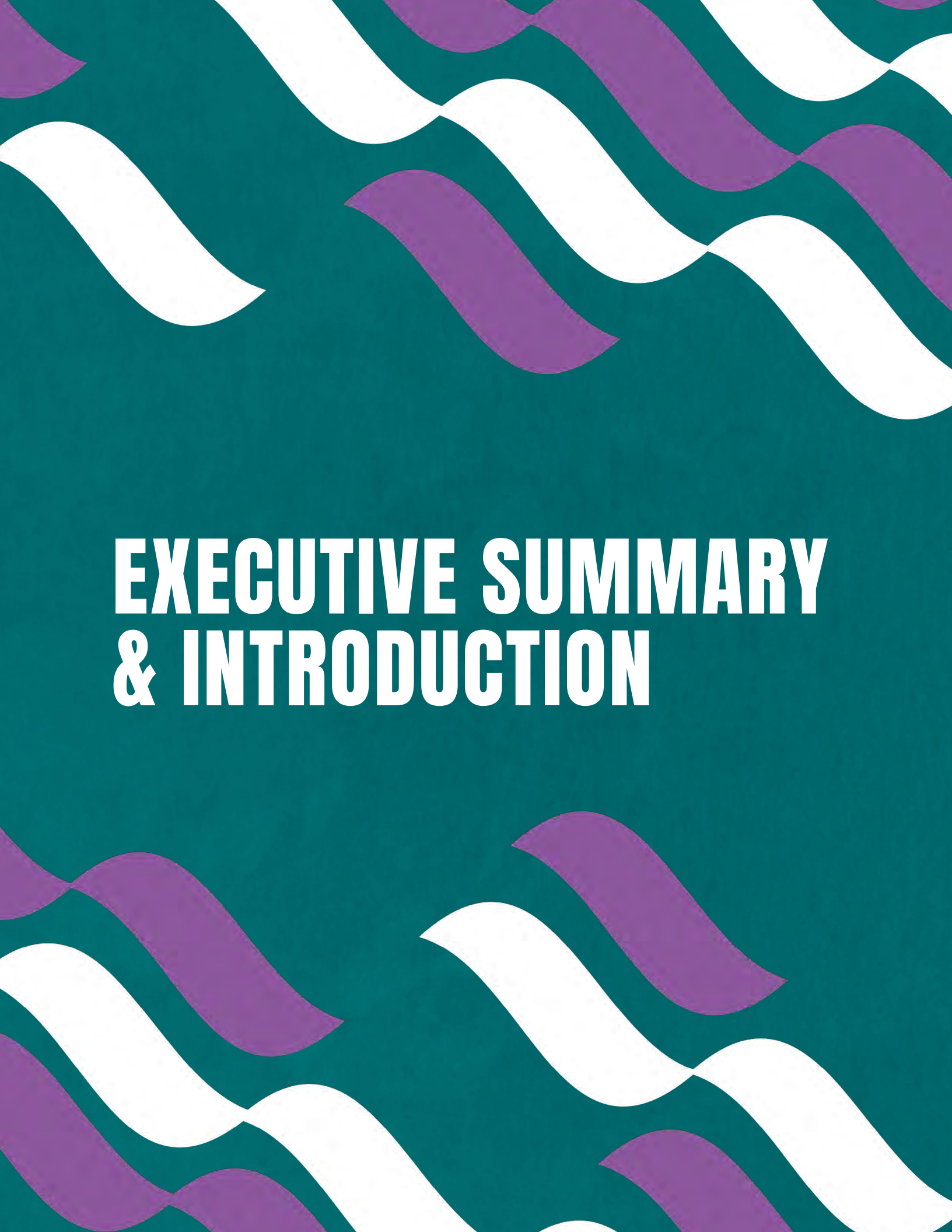
Survivor Needs

40

**Programs to Address
Survivor Needs**

52

Citations



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY & INTRODUCTION

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2025, the Illinois Domestic Violence Hotline saw another record-breaking year of contacts, receiving 69,748 calls, texts, and chats.

- » These contacts accounted for a 17% increase in contacts from 2024 and an 181% increase from 2019.
- » As of 2025, contacts from the City of Chicago have doubled (122% increase) compared to pre-pandemic 2019.

Domestic violence shelter remains a top need among survivors who contact the Hotline and shelter capacity cannot meet demand.

- » The Hotline received a record breaking 20,623 requests for shelter in 2025, requested by almost 1 in every 3 contacts (30%).
- » Shelter was the top need among contacts from Chicago, even as there were no available beds or cribs in DV shelters for nearly half of the year - 157 days - in 2025.
- » The shelter crisis was also persistent, though improved, in the suburbs where there were 71 days or a quarter of the year without beds or cribs.

Demand for affordable and transitional housing also continued to skyrocket as shelters remained full.

- » In 2025, the Hotline received 4,303 requests for affordable or transitional housing across Illinois, a staggering 85% increase since 2024.
- » There were 1,532 requests for affordable or transitional housing in Chicago alone, a 56% increase from 2024.

In recognition of limited service capacity to meet survivor needs, the Hotline continued to expand its own supplemental programming to bridge the gap.

- » In 2025, the Hotline provided hotel stays to 700 survivors, including 338 adults, 280 children, and 82 pets, covering more than \$900,000 in housing costs.
- » In 2025, the Illinois Domestic Violence Hotline's Safe Rides program provided 1,934 rides to 2,951 passengers, covering 96.6k miles at a cost of \$181,140.64.

INTRODUCTION

Project Purpose

Annually, The Network: Advocating Against Domestic Violence (The Network) publishes *Measuring Safety* to assess experiences of gender-based violence and responding service providers in Illinois. This volume is the first in a series of 2025 data reports. It focuses specifically on the Illinois Domestic Violence Hotline operated by The Network. The goal of each 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. The insights provided in this report serve as a blueprint for public and private stakeholders to invest in services, programs, policies, and systems change that increase safety for survivors.

Data Sources

This report contains data from two primary sources, outlined below.

iCarol: Data on contacts, service needs, and other Hotline activities are documented in a web-based database system, iCarol. Information in this system is tracked by Victim Information and Referral Advocates (VIRAs) during their daily activities. Data exported from iCarol was analyzed to produce the statistics throughout this report.

Victim Information and Referral Advocate (VIRA) Stories: Hotline staff, called VIRAs, provide anonymous stories about connecting callers to resources for routine grant reports. Those stories have been gathered and re-shared throughout this report as VIRA Stories.



ILLINOIS DOMESTIC VIOLENCE HOTLINE 2025 DATA



Photo by: Joey Lee



PROGRAM HISTORY

In 1998, the City of Chicago introduced a free, 24/7 helpline aimed at connecting domestic violence victims with local services. The Network has been responsible for operating this hotline, known as the Illinois Domestic Violence Hotline (IL DV Hotline or “the Hotline”), for the past 28 years. In 2008, the Hotline expanded its service area to cover survivors throughout the state of Illinois.

Trained *Victim Information and Referral Advocates (VIRAs)* have diligently answered well over three quarters of a million contacts with confidence and care throughout the Hotline's history.

Survivors seeking information about their options, assistance with safety planning, or immediate access to shelter, transportation, or other provider referrals can contact the Hotline for a needs-based, trauma-informed response via phone, chat, and text at **877-863-6338**.

Data presented in this section of the report is sourced from the Hotline database, iCarol. It provides insights into the frequency and location of calls, as well as rich details on survivor and provider needs. Additionally, it outlines supplemental programming offered directly to survivors by the Hotline.

To prioritize a trauma-informed approach with callers in crisis, VIRAs collect caller demographic data on a voluntary basis. Question responses are only entered when the caller is willing and able to provide answers. Due to low response rates, demographic data on Hotline callers is not representative of all callers and is, therefore, excluded from this report.



To request other data about contacts from your area, readers may submit a data request form here: <https://the-network.org/policy-and-advocacy/data-request-form/>.

For more representative demographic data on survivors across Illinois, refer to a previous or future volume of our bi-annual Gender-Based Violence Services.¹

OVERALL CONTACTS

In 2025, the Hotline received a total of **69,748 contacts**,* comprised of 64,230 calls (92% of contacts), 1,840 texts (3%) and 3,678 chats via The Network's website (5%). Victim Information and Referral Advocates (VIRAs) dedicated 12,438 hours in 2025 responding to an average of 191 contacts each day. This marks a 17% increase in contacts from the previous year and a staggering **181% from 2019**.²



69,748*

TOTAL CONTACTS RECEIVED

in 2025 by the IL DV Hotline

64,230

CALLS

(92% of contacts)

1840

TEXTS

(3% of contacts)

3678

CHATS

(5% of contacts)

**Victim Information and Referral Advocates
(VIRA's) dedicated**

12,438

HOURS

**RESPONDING
TO AN
AVERAGE OF**

191

CONTACTS

per day

17%

INCREASE

from the previous year

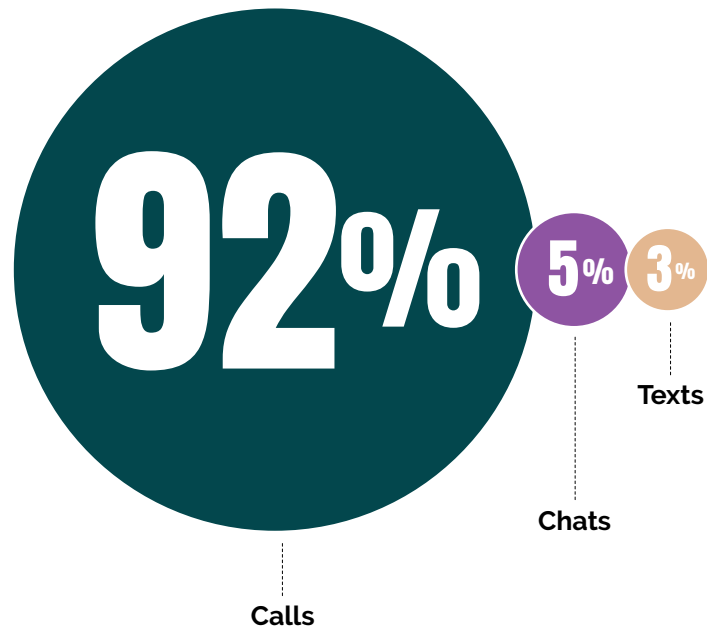
181%

INCREASE IN CONTACTS

from pre-pandemic levels in 2019

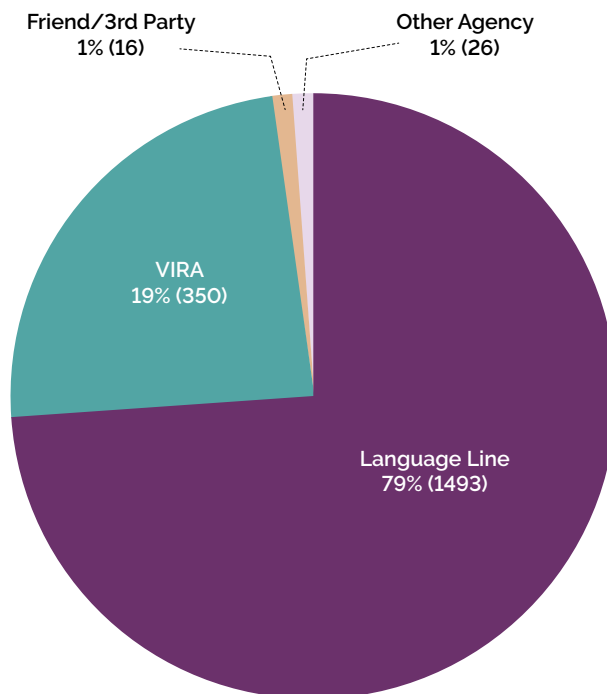
* The IL DV Hotline receives contacts from inside and outside of Illinois. This reflects the total number of contacts received during 2025. Other contact totals are provided by specific location throughout this report.

Method of Contact to the IL DV Hotline in 2025

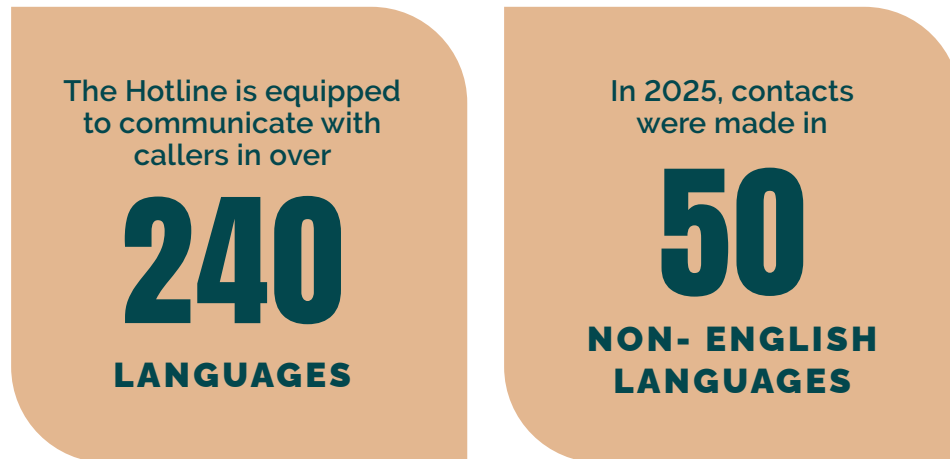


Source: IL DV Hotline

Who Interpreted Non-English Contact with IL DV Hotline in 2025

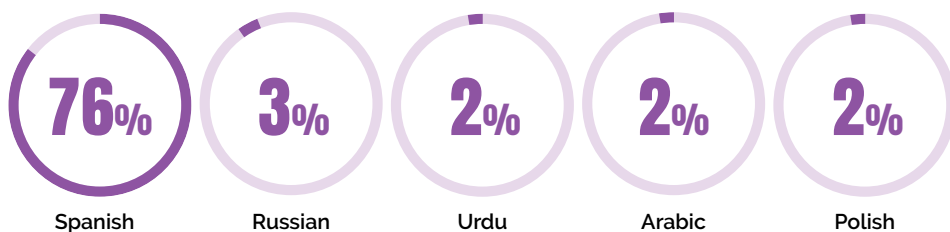


Source: IL DV Hotline



The Hotline is equipped to communicate with callers in over 240 languages through the Language Line, a live interpretation service, and by cultivating a multi-lingual staff to enhance accessibility for all survivors. As total contact with the Hotline increases, so does the need for interpretation services. In 2025, contacts were made in 50 non-English languages across 2,214 contacts or 7% of all contacts. Among these non-English language contacts, the five most common were Spanish (76%), Russian (3%), Urdu (2%), Arabic (2%) and Polish (2%).³

Top 5 Non-English Languages Used in Calls to the IL DV Hotline in 2025



Source: IL DV Hotline

In 2025, the most common tool for interpretation services was the Language Line, accounting for more than three quarters or 79% of all interpreted calls. Roughly a fifth (19%) of non-English contacts were directly interpreted by bilingual VIRAs and, in rare cases, third parties like friends or another agency's staff member provided interpretation, accounting for 1% of contacts each.⁴ The variety of methods available for interpreting calls from any language ensures that no survivor is ever turned away from the Hotline due to a language barrier.

While many callers do not share how they came to know about the Hotline, just under half of those who do so recall their referral source as a domestic violence service provider (45%). Other common referral sources included Chicago Police (10%), internet searches (6%), medical services (5%) or some other source (10%).⁵ The variety of referral sources that callers identify demonstrates the importance of promoting the Hotline across communities to ensure that no matter where a survivor asks for help, the person receiving their disclosure is prepared to connect them with trauma-informed care.

STORIES FROM THE HOTLINE VIRAS IN 2025

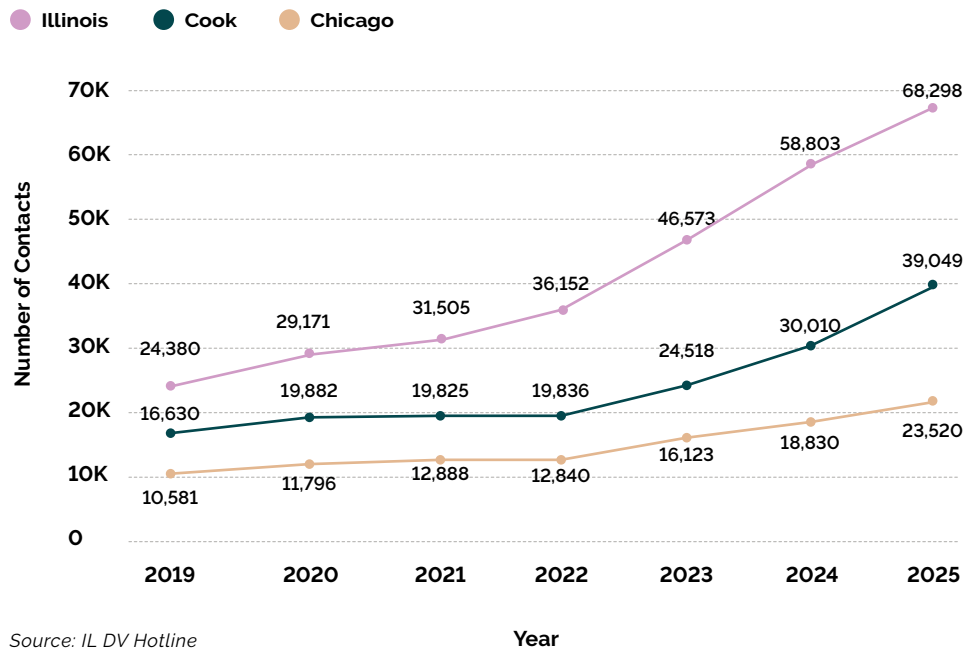
Safety Planning for Stalking

"I spoke with a male survivor of domestic violence who was fearful of his ex-husband. He was being stalked, his ex showing up where he worked and calling repeatedly from different numbers. I affirmed his decision to ask for help and provided emotional support as he shared his story. Once his needs were clear, I referred him to a variety of resources including legal aid organizations and LGBTQ+ focused domestic violence organizations. As a part of his safety plan, we discussed notifying the people in his life about what was happening, putting together a go-bag with essential items should he need to abruptly leave home, and decided he would pursue an order of protection. Our partner organization for the After-Hours Order of Protection program was at capacity, so I assisted him directly with completing the paperwork and prepared him for what to expect from his hearing. As we wrapped our call, I reminded him that we are always here for him, even as his safety needs change."

CONTACTS BY LOCATION

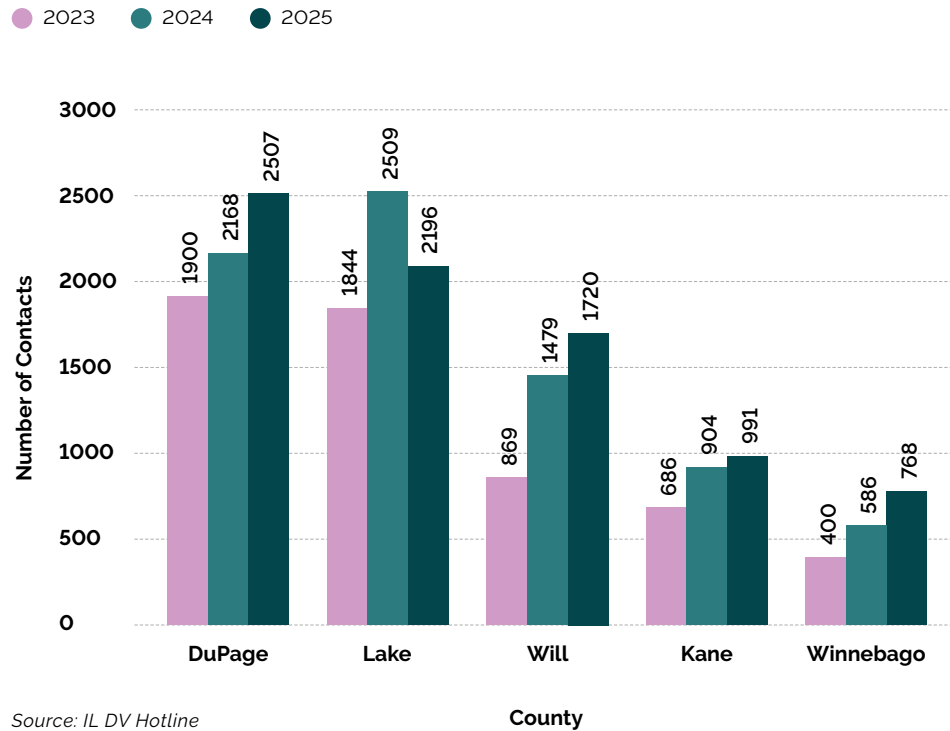
In 2025, contacts to the Illinois Domestic Violence Hotline came from across the country, including 48 of the 50 United States, alongside 6 international locations.⁶ There are many reasons for these non-Illinois calls to an Illinois-based hotline. Survivors may reside in another state and seek refuge in Illinois (or vice versa), friends of Illinois residents may seek support for their long-distance loved ones, and many survivors live in border communities with neighboring states such as Wisconsin, Indiana, Iowa, Missouri, etc. However, the vast majority of contacts primarily come from within Illinois itself.

Contacts to the IL DV Hotline Over Time by Location



In 2025, the Hotline received **68,298 contacts from across Illinois**, including 63,006 calls (92% of contacts), 1,662 texts (2.5%), and 3,630 chats (5%). These contacts came from **96 of 102 Illinois counties**. This was a 16% increase in contacts across Illinois compared to 2024 and a **180% increase** since pre-pandemic 2019.⁷

Top 5 Counties to Contact the IL DV Hotline Outside of Cook



Cook County has historically been the county with the highest number of contacts to the Hotline in Illinois. In 2025, **the Hotline received 39,049 contacts from Cook County**, a 30% increase from 2024. This is part of a three-year upward trend after several years of stagnation from 2019-2022. Outside of Cook, most of the top five highest contact counties also saw continued growth. DuPage County returned to its place as the highest contact county outside of Cook with 2,507 contacts (16% increase) over Lake County which led in 2024 but saw a decrease in 2025 with 2,196 contacts (-12% decrease). Among the other leading counties, Will County made 1,720 contacts (16% increase), Kane County made 991 contacts (10% increase), and Winnebago made 768 contacts (31% increase).⁸ This data highlights the continued importance and increasing demand for the Hotline's services across the state.

In 2025, the Hotline received

23,520

CONTACTS FROM CHICAGO

a 25% increase from 2024 and a 122% increase
from pre-pandemic 2019

In 2025, the **Hotline received 23,520 contacts from Chicago**, comprising 22,006 calls (94% of contacts), 896 texts (4%), and 618 chats (3%). This represented a notable **25% increase from 2024 and a significant 122% increase from pre-pandemic 2019**. Like Cook County, Chicago experienced stagnation in contacts from 2019 to 2022, making 2025's growth part of a marked year over year improvement.⁹ Anecdotally, VIRAs associate the increase in calls from Chicago with a number of overlapping phenomena, including an increase in Chicago-area shelter strain, which results in repeated calls from survivors seeking shelter, and an increase in capacity to provide Uber rides, often within the city. There has also been an influx of callers interested in Network programs for Chicago residents like the Survivor Fund, along with new migrants who often have experience with GBV. Staff also noted an increase in referrals from Alderpeople to constituents. Advertisements on the south side of the city may have also driven new contacts.

When examining contacts by ZIP code, it becomes evident that not all communities in Chicago are equally likely to contact the Hotline. **Areas in the far south and near west sides of Chicago contacted the Hotline at a much higher frequency** than communities on the far north side or near downtown. This aligns with the placement of billboard advertisements for the Hotline that were placed in the far south side in 2025. The five highest contact ZIP codes in Chicago in 2025 were 60617 (782 contacts), 60620 (759), 60649 (684), 60640 (596), and 60624 (565).¹⁰



Further details on Hotline contacts organized by Chicago Ward, Illinois House and Senate district, and federal Congressional districts are available on the Network's website at <https://the-network.org/report/>.

2025 Illinois Domestic Violence Hotline Contacts* by County

WINNEBAGO COUNTY

2025 Count: 586
Change: +32%
Difference: 186

STARK COUNTY

2025 Count: 4
Change: +100%
Difference: 4

SCHUYLER COUNTY

2025 Count: 2
Change: +100%
Difference: 2

BROWN COUNTY

2025 Count: 0
Change: 0%
Difference: -2

SCOTT COUNTY

2025 Count: 0
Change: 0%
Difference: -1

CALHOUN COUNTY

2025 Count: 0
Change: 0%
Difference: -2

JERSEY COUNTY

2025 Count: 1
Change: +100%
Difference: 1

MONTGOMERY COUNTY

2025 Count: 4
Change: -150%
Difference: -6

JOHNSON COUNTY

2025 Count: 4
Change: +100%
Difference: 4

ALEXANDER COUNTY

2025 Count: 15
Change: +93%
Difference: 14

LAKE COUNTY

2025 Count: 2196
Change: -14%
Difference: -313

KANE COUNTY

2025 Count: 991
Change: +9%
Difference: 87

DUPAGE COUNTY

2025 Count: 2507
Change: +14%
Difference: 339

COOK COUNTY

2025 Count: 39,049
Change: +23%
Difference: 9039

WILL COUNTY

2025 Count: 1720
Change: +14%
Difference: 241

IROQUOIS COUNTY

2025 Count: 7
Change: -157%
Difference: -11

CUMBERLAND COUNTY

2025 Count: 1
Change: -400%
Difference: -4

EDWARDS COUNTY

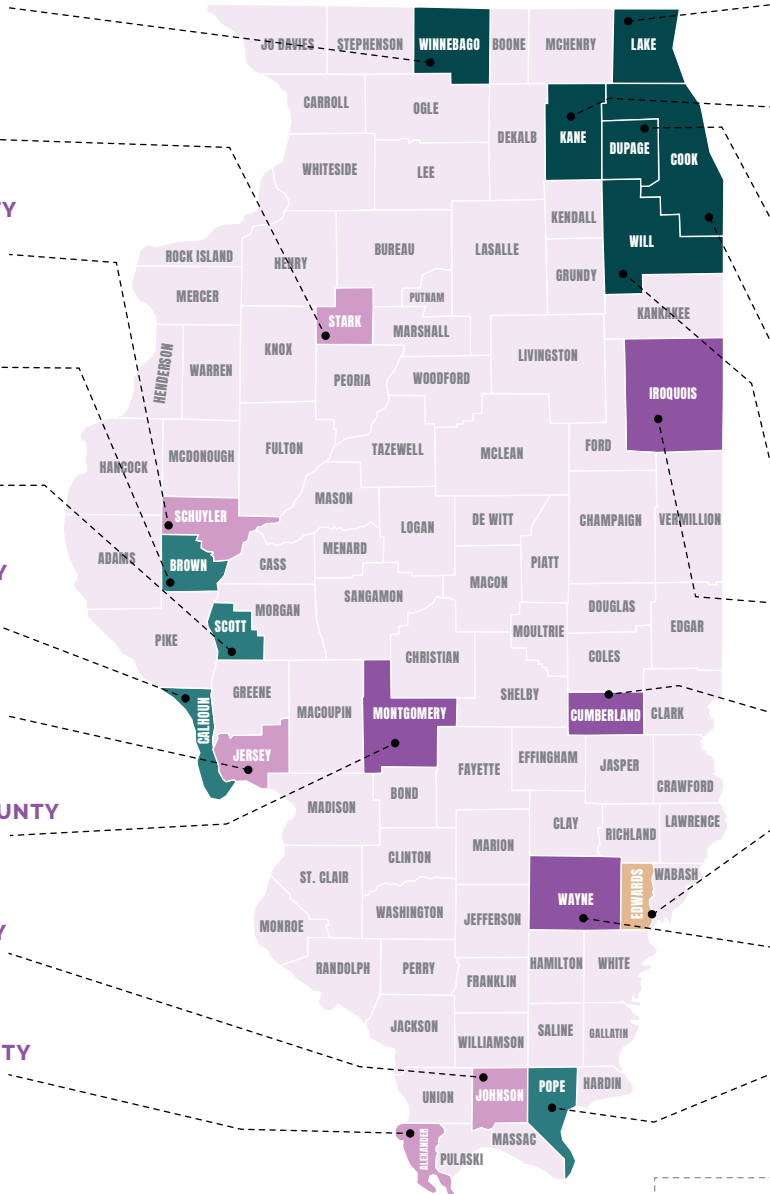
2025 Count: 1
Change: +100%
Difference: 1

WAYNE COUNTY

2025 Count: 2
Change: -150%
Difference: -3

POPE COUNTY

2025 Count: 0
Change: 0%
Difference: 0



*Contacts: Calls, texts, chats

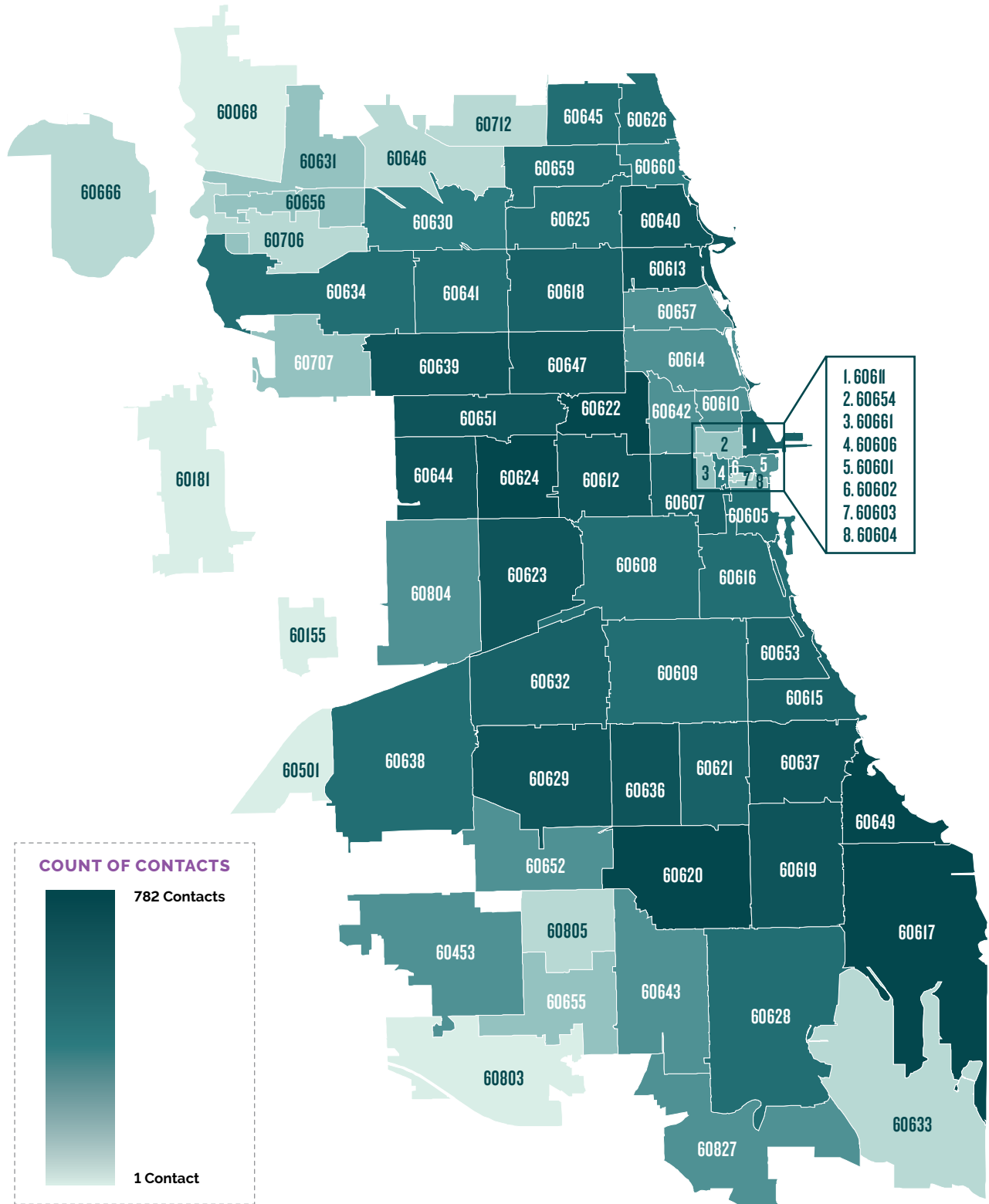
IL DV Hotline received
68,298 **ACROSS** **96** out of **102**
CONTACTS COUNTIES IN ILLINOIS

MAP OF CONTACTS LEGEND

- Highest Number of Contacts
- Largest Increase in Contacts
- Largest Decrease in Contacts
- New Contacts (last 3 years)
- No Contacts

Source: IL DV Hotline

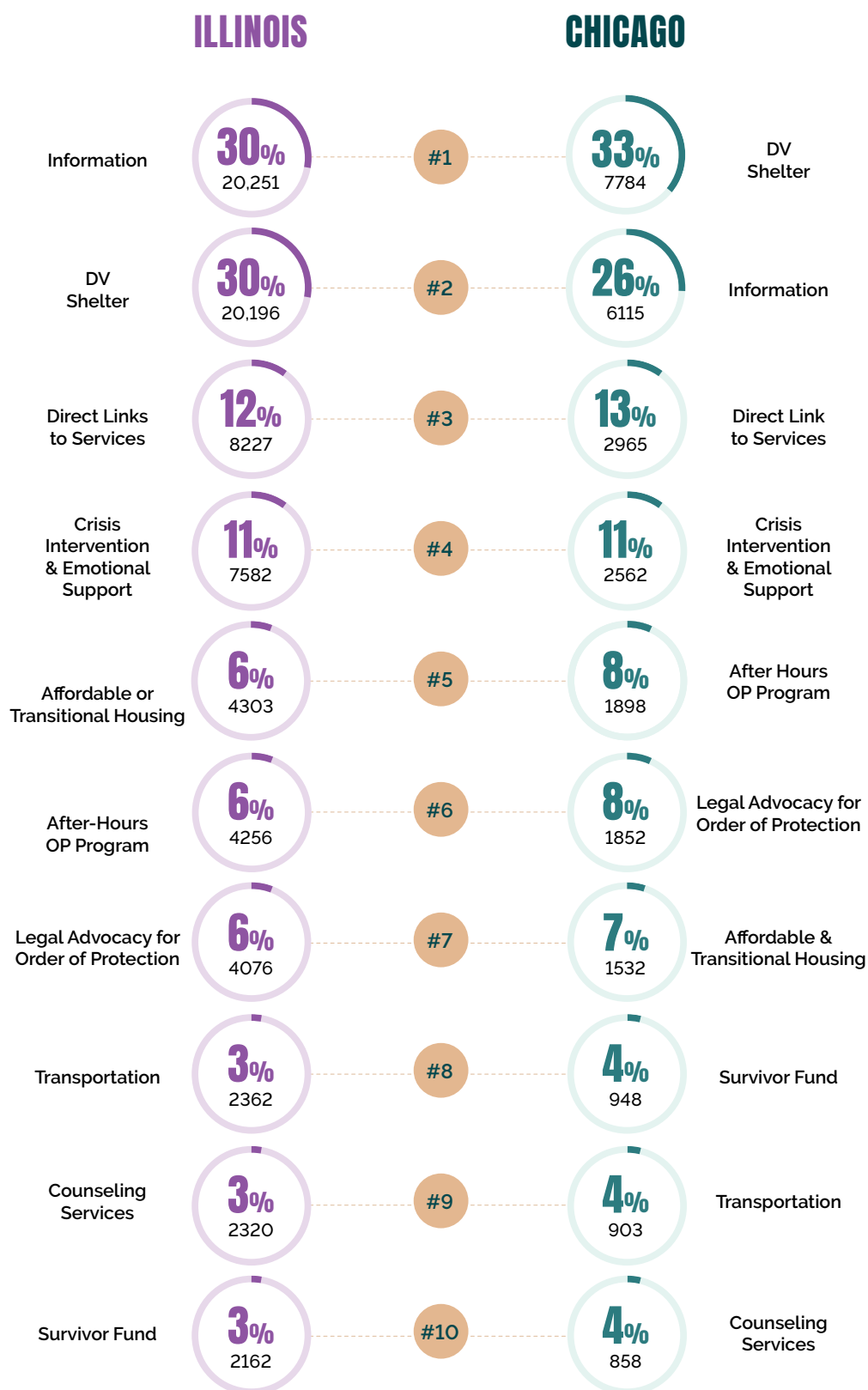
Map of Chicago Contacts to IL DV Hotline by Zip Code in 2025



SURVIVOR NEEDS

With tens of thousands of contacts each year, the Illinois Domestic Violence Hotline has a wealth of insight into the emerging needs among survivors in communities across the state. The Hotline tracks 44 different service needs among callers, both for survivors and providers of gender-based violence (GBV) services. Data in this section of the report explores the top ten needs identified among survivors.

Top 10 Survivor Needs Among Contacts to the IL DV Hotline in 2025



Source: IL DV Hotline

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SHELTER

In 2025, the Illinois Domestic Violence Hotline experienced another record-breaking surge in requests for domestic violence (DV) shelter. **20,623** callers requested domestic violence shelter, 20,196 of which came from Illinois in 2025. This means that nearly a third of all Illinois contacts to the Hotline (30%) were seeking shelter, and statewide requests saw a 6.6% increase from 2024. There continued to be a strong demand and urgency for shelter among survivors in Chicago as well, where there were **7,784** requests for shelter, a 20% increase from 2024, making it the number one need among all Chicago contacts.¹¹

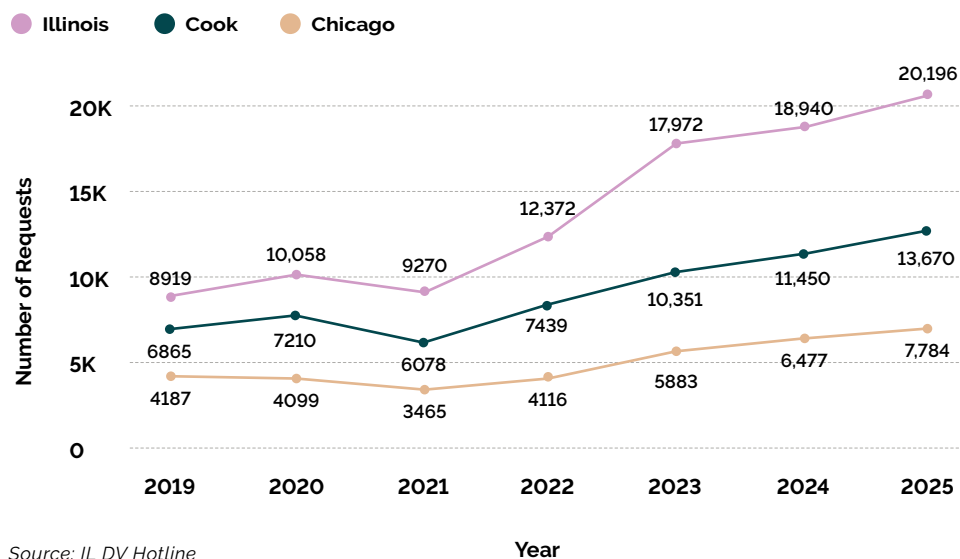
There was a record-breaking

20,623

REQUESTS FOR DV SHELTER
to the Hotline across Illinois in 2025

Requests for shelter remain a top need identified among callers each year. Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, requests for shelter have risen dramatically, increasing by 126% from pre-pandemic levels in Illinois alone. In Chicago, requests for shelter increased by 86% from 2019.¹² Access to safe shelter can help survivors escape dangerous, violent situations and in some cases, save their lives. The staggering year-to-year increase in DV shelter requests demonstrates the critical importance of ensuring access to safe shelter for survivors of domestic violence during times of heightened vulnerability.

Requests for Domestic Violence Shelter Over Time by Location



STORIES FROM THE HOTLINE VIRAS IN 2025

The Wait is Over

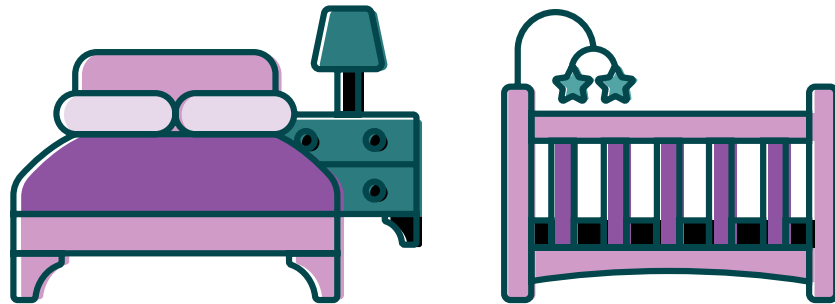
"I coordinated a Safe Ride for a survivor in need of transportation to the domestic violence shelter where he had just been accepted as a client. While we waited for his car to arrive, he told me how grateful he was for the ride and how excited he was to finally have been linked with shelter. He'd been sleeping in hospitals, police stations, and different homes for the past three weeks, but with our help he had the ongoing support he needed to find safety. In turn, I congratulated him on this new opportunity and praised his resilience in the face of his long wait for shelter. Once he was safely on his ride there, I reminded him that we would always be here if he needed further support."

The Illinois Domestic Violence Hotline maintains close relationships with every domestic violence shelter provider in the state to track the availability of shelter spaces for survivors on a daily basis. While not every provider shares specific details about their daily capacity, it is estimated that there are at least 97 shelter beds in Chicago, 163 in the Chicago suburbs, including Cook, DuPage, Lake, Kane, and McHenry counties, and 444 beds across 21 other central and southern counties in Illinois. This means that there are roughly **704 shelter beds across Illinois,¹³ aiming to support an estimated 2.5 million Illinois residents who will experience violence in their lifetime.¹⁴**

However, despite these efforts, the numbers reveal a clear gap: shelter capacity in Chicago and the surrounding suburbs has struggled to keep up with the growing demand.

For nearly half of the year, **spanning 157 days, there were no available beds or cribs in DV shelters in Chicago, marking a 21% increase from 2024.** Specifically, there were 157 days with no available beds (a 11% increase), 247 days without cribs (a 5% decrease), and **more than three quarters of the year – 323 days – with fewer than 5 beds available (a 58% increase).** The suburbs surrounding Chicago also faced a challenge with capacity. For **nearly a quarter of the year, totaling 71 days, there were no available beds or cribs in DV shelters across the suburbs**, including 71 days without beds and 174 days without cribs, nearly half the year.¹⁵ **This underscores the urgent need to increase shelter capacity in and around the city to ensure that survivors have access to safety when they are ready to leave.**

**FOR 157 DAYS
NO AVAILABLE**



**BEDS OR CRIBS
IN CHICAGO DV SHELTERS**
marking a 21% increase from 2024

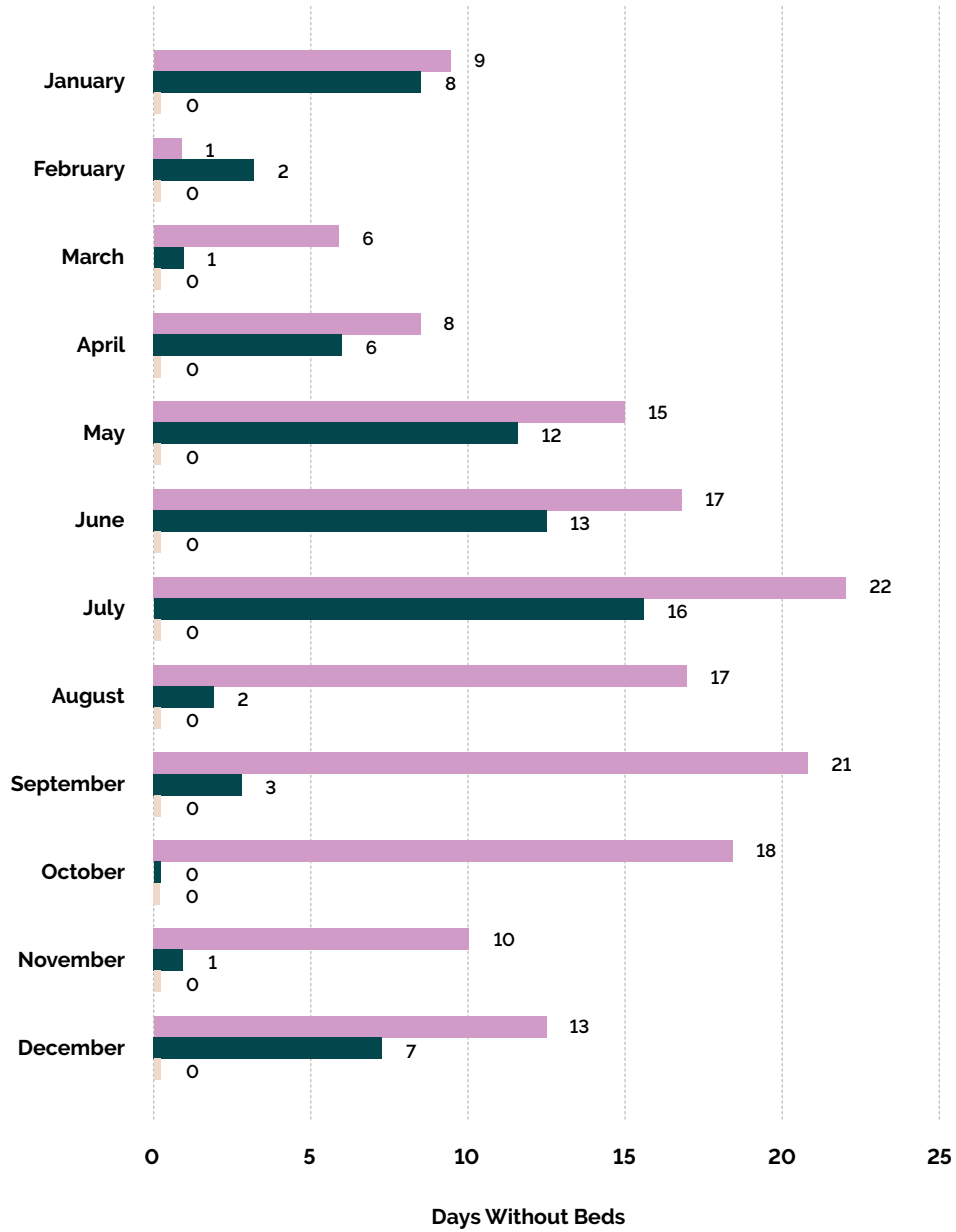


Photo by: Mieke Campbell

In contrast, across central and southern Illinois, there were no days where there were no beds, 15 days without cribs, and no days where there were no beds and cribs.¹⁶ However, it's crucial to note that the availability of beds doesn't always guarantee access for survivors. For many survivors, the nearest shelter option is located hours away and there are no reliable transportation options to get them there safely. For others, even if a distant shelter has space, they may not be accepted because they live outside the designated service area. Shelters near and far from the survivor may also have stipulations that restrict who can use the available bed that the survivor does not qualify for.

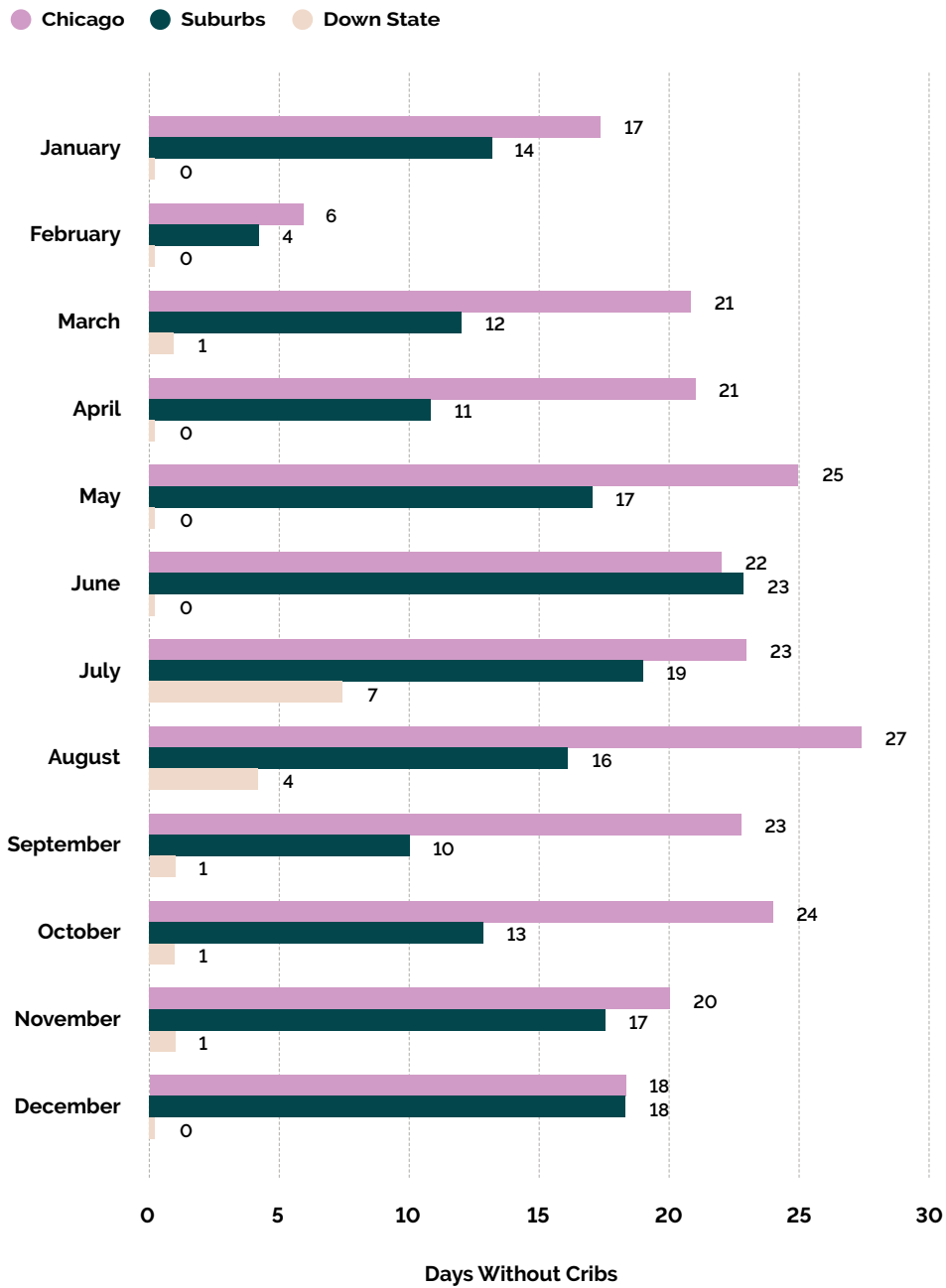
Lack of Shelter *Beds* by Region in 2025

Chicago Suburbs Down State



Source: IL DV Hotline

Lack of Shelter *Cribs* by Region in 2025



Source: IL DV Hotline

INFORMATION

One of the most common requests received by the Illinois DV Hotline is for information, which encompasses a wide range of inquiries. Callers may seek to understand if their experiences constitute abuse, learn about their rights and options, gather information about local resources, or engage in safety planning with a domestic violence professional.

Safety planning goes beyond providing a simple checklist of actions and instead involves a comprehensive process of supporting survivors as they assess their situation for risks, available resources, options, and strengths. This process is centered on the survivor's own definition of safety and assists them in developing strategies to achieve a safer situation.

In 2025, there were 20,251 requests for safety planning across Illinois, accounting for nearly a third (30%) of all contacts and representing a 10% increase from 2024. In Chicago alone, there were 6,115 requests for information, making up 26% of all contacts from the city, a 13% increase from 2024.¹⁷

This expansion in callers requesting information demonstrates the Hotline's increasing reach and capacity to support survivors. The variety of information, resources, and referrals the Hotline provides survivors can alter the course of their lives. For some callers, the Hotline might be the first place in which a person listens to and believes their story. The Hotline serves a critical role in supporting survivors, a role that continues to increase year by year.

STORIES FROM THE HOTLINE VIRAS IN 2025

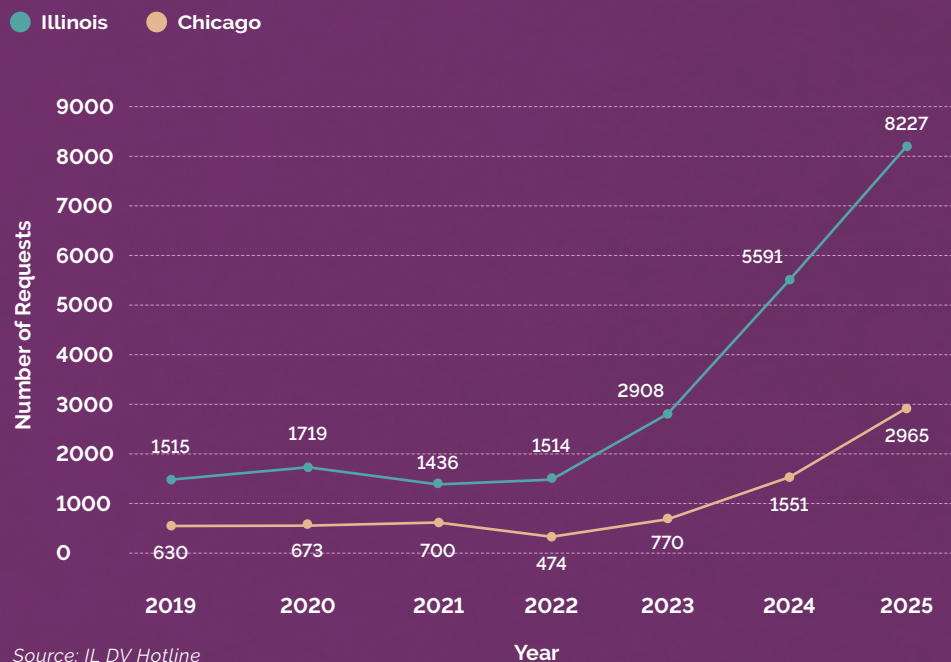
The Search for Shelter

"I spoke with a survivor in need of emergency shelter who was at risk of firearm violence. She lived in Chicago with the person causing her harm, but we had exhausted all options for shelter within an hour of the city. No one had room for a single woman, but she needed a safe place to go. We talked through a safety plan at length and when I learned that she was originally from another state, I asked how she would feel about a shelter near home. Open to the idea, I connected her with a shelter in that state for an intake. Later that day, she called back and shared that she had been accepted but did not have the means to get there. I transferred her to our Supportive Services Coordinator to help with the out-of-state transportation plan, who booked her a one-way Greyhound bus ticket and a Safe Ride to get to the station. After a long day of searching, the caller thanked our team for all the support we were able to provide."

DIRECT LINK TO SERVICES

The third most common request received by the Illinois Domestic Violence Hotline in 2025 was for direct links to services. In addition to offering information and a list of referral options, the Hotline frequently facilitates direct connections between callers and service providers. Recognizing that not every caller is a survivor in need of services, nor is every survivor ready to take the next step and connect with services, this process does not occur for every caller. When a direct connection is what the survivor needs, The Hotline makes a warm handoff to reduce the stress and trauma associated with seeking assistance. In 2025, the Hotline facilitated 8,227 direct links to services for survivors across Illinois, marking a striking 47% increase from 2024. Within Chicago specifically, there were 2,965 links made, almost double the amount in 2024, at a 91% increase.¹⁸ This directly reflects the work the Hotline has done over the last three calendar years to coordinate with domestic violence shelters to strengthen the referral and intake process and requirements.

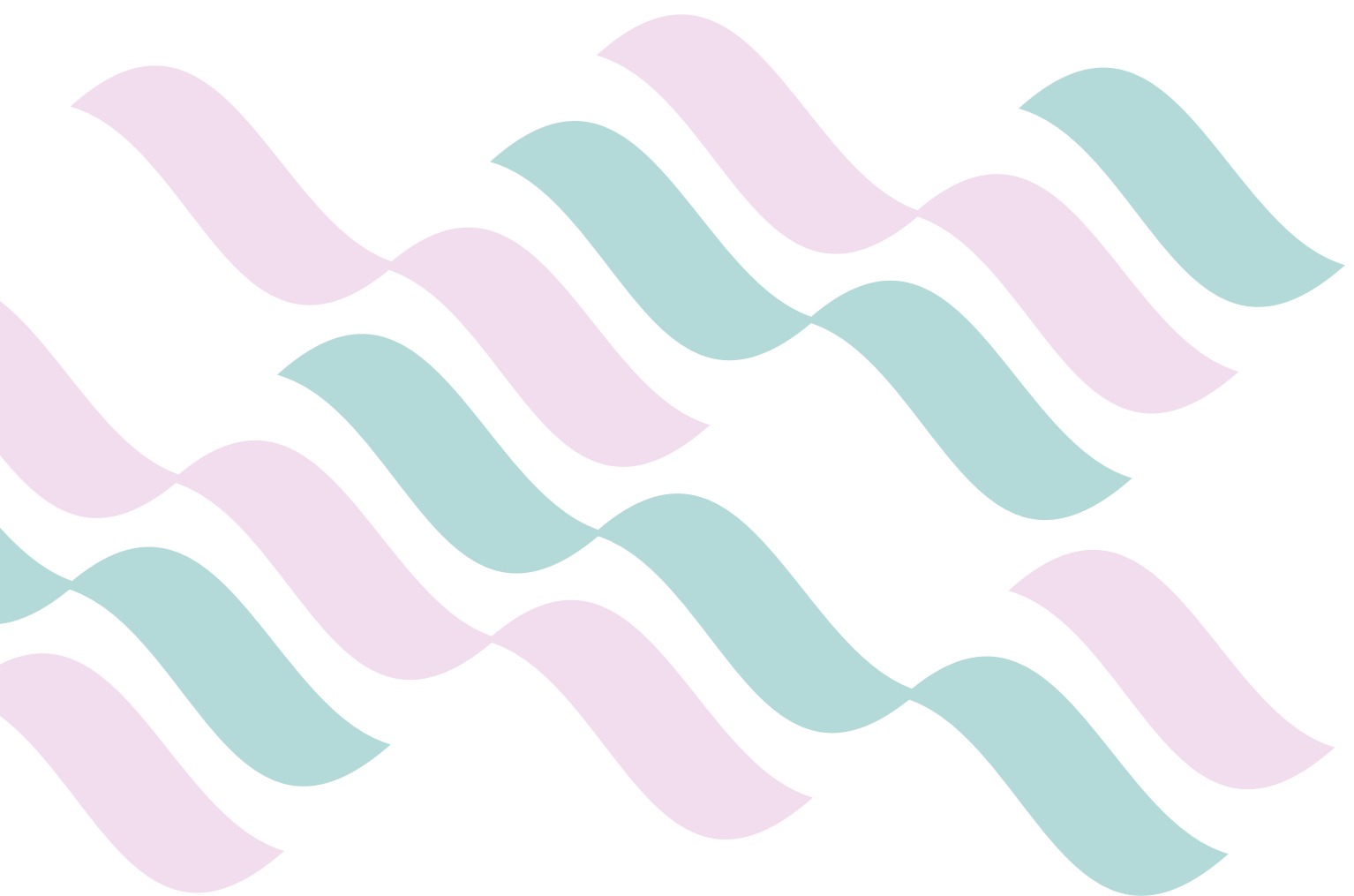
Requests for Direct Links to Services Over Time by Location



CRISIS INTERVENTION & EMOTIONAL SUPPORT

Contacts to the Hotline often occur during moments of crisis for survivors and providing a trauma-informed response is an essential component of Hotline services. VIRAs offer emotional support through active listening, affirmations and emotional support, and assisting survivors in moving out of crisis with a calm and grounding approach.

In 2025, the Hotline received 7,582 requests for crisis intervention, marking a significant 44% increase from 2024. Of those, 2,562 requests originated from Chicago, a similarly notable 58% increase from 2024.¹⁹ There may be many factors influencing this growth, including relatively new programs that bring callers in crisis to the Hotline, like the Cook County based After Hours Emergency Order of Protection screening process, and other challenges that create distress, like the shelter crisis.

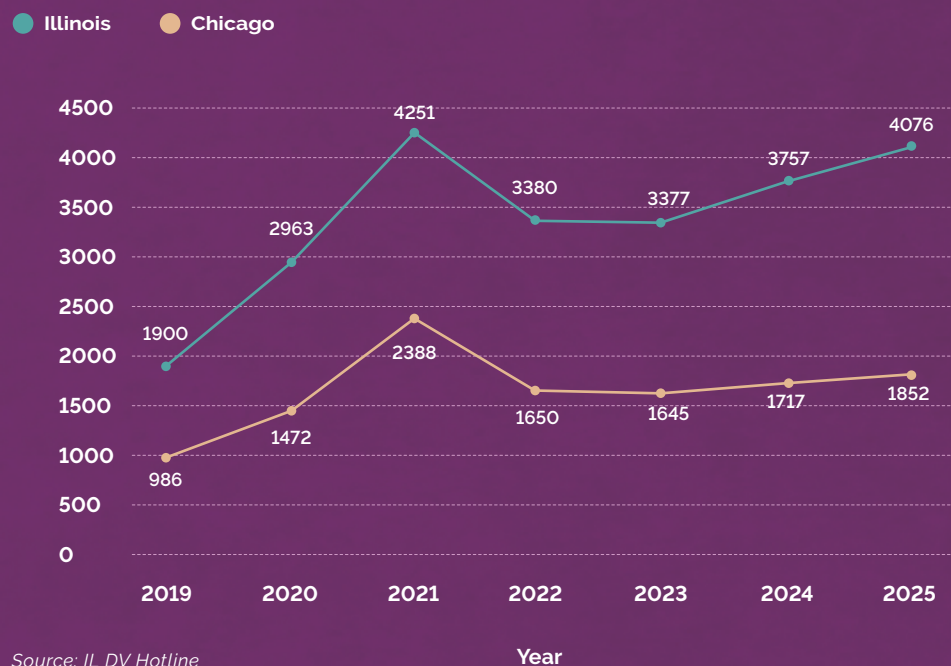


LEGAL ADVOCACY FOR ORDERS OF PROTECTION

Legal advocacy services, particularly to support survivors in filing for an order of protection, were amongst the most popular requests to the Hotline in 2025. Legal advocates are trained staff at gender-based violence agencies who are empowered under the Illinois Domestic Violence Act (IDVA) to assist in preparing and filing orders of protection in civil court. This assistance includes providing court accompaniment to the survivor throughout their case. While not attorneys, legal advocates help survivors navigate the complexities of the court system and often facilitate other processes such as making police reports, seeking criminal charges, and connecting survivors to legal aid services for representation in divorce, parentage, and other court cases.

In 2025, the Hotline received 4,076 requests for legal advocacy services across Illinois, with 1,852 from within Chicago.²⁰ This represents a significant need for such services, indicating that survivors are seeking support in navigating the legal system to protect themselves from further harm. Consistent with previous years, requests for legal advocacy have maintained a relatively steady pace. Legal advocacy requests have grown 9% since 2024, a steadier growth rate than many other top services.²¹ Requests for the Cook County based After Hours Order of Protection program also emerged in the top ten list of requests and are addressed later in this report.

Requests for Legal Advocacy Services Over Time by Location



Survivors have the option to file orders of protection with or without the assistance of a legal advocate. However, during the COVID-19 pandemic, navigating the court process became significantly more complex due to the introduction of remote filing and hearing procedures. This likely contributed to the notable increase in requests for legal advocacy between 2019 and 2021.

As courts across Illinois transition back to in-person proceedings post-COVID, survivors have sought access to legal advocacy services at lower rates than at the height of the pandemic. However, **it is apparent that the “new normal” need for legal advocacy services remains substantially higher than pre-COVID levels, indicated by a 88% increase in demand from 2019 across Illinois.**²² This suggests that even as the court system adapts to post-pandemic operations, survivors continue to require significant support and assistance in navigating the legal process to ensure their safety and protection. The presence of immigration enforcement officers in Chicago during the latter half of 2025 renewed the need for remote access to court among immigrant survivors, which may be one of the factors contributing to recent growth in legal advocacy service requests.

STORIES FROM THE HOTLINE VIRAS IN 2025

Judgment-Free OP Support

“I received a call from a survivor with two children looking for information about how to get a new order of protection. She shared that the person causing her harm was currently in jail after a physically violent incident and that she wanted to get an order of protection before he was released the next day. She recounted that she had an order of protection once before, but the respondent’s family had threatened her and she finally relented to their pressure to drop the order of protection when he was incarcerated. The survivor expressed feeling shame and disappointment for letting go of the order, especially because she feared the respondent would come looking for her family when he was released. I told her that this was a safe place to talk and encouraged her to share her feelings, guiding her through a breathing exercise to ground our conversation. After sharing information and resources on the process, I empathized with her again and affirmed her autonomy in this decision-making process. By the end of our call, she was calmer and ready to be transferred to a legal advocate working at the domestic violence courthouse to get started on the paperwork.”

AFFORDABLE AND TRANSITIONAL HOUSING

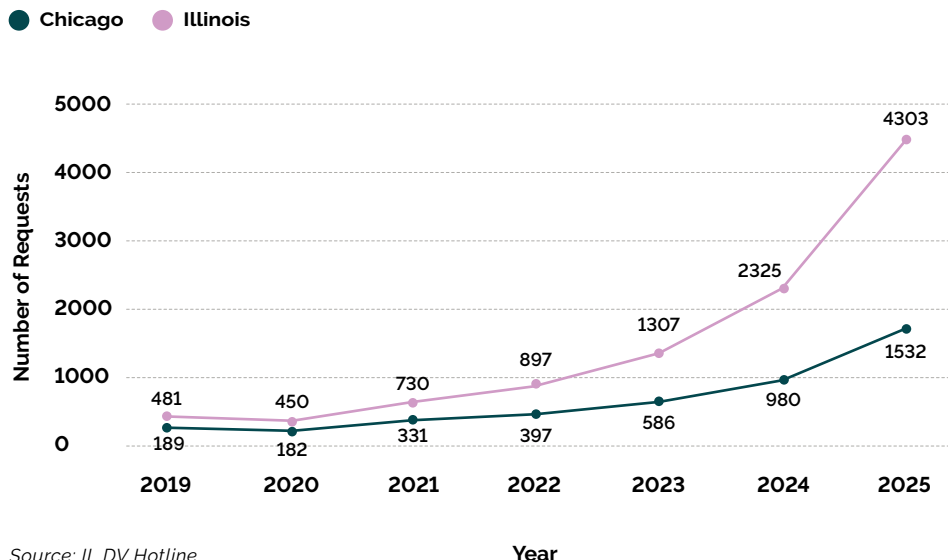
Having a safe place to stay is a fundamental aspect of a survivor's journey towards recovery from domestic violence. Whether transitioning out of the shelter system into independent housing or moving directly from an unsafe environment to a new home, survivors require access to affordable housing options. **Studies show that up to 94% of survivors experience financial abuse during violent relationships,²³** which can lead to difficulties in accessing market-rate housing due to credit or cash flow issues.

4,303 REQUESTS

A STAGGERING 85% INCREASE
for affordable or transitional housing across Illinois

In 2025, the Hotline received **4,303 requests for affordable or transitional housing across Illinois, a staggering 85% increase.** There were 1,532 requests for affordable or transitional housing in Chicago alone, a 56% increase from 2024.²⁴ A significant proportion of this increase may be related to the Hotline's **housing assessment program** that began helping callers enter Chicago's gender-based violence Coordinated Entry System in 2019. Rapid growth in the interest in and reach of that program suggests that there is incredible for safe affordable and transitional housing among survivors.

Requests for Affordable Housing Over Time by Location



COUNSELING

Experiences of domestic violence are profoundly traumatic and can have significant negative impacts on survivors' mental health, including increased risk of depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and suicidal ideation.²⁵ As such, counseling and clinical therapy services play a crucial role in supporting survivors on their journey towards healing and recovery.

Across Illinois, there were 2,320 requests for counseling in 2025, an increase of 16% from 2024. This is the first significant increase since 2022, as requests had stagnated in recent years. Chicago saw 858 requests, a 47% increase from last year.²⁶ Survivors will continue to need access to counseling services, in order to heal from harmful relationships that negatively impact their mood, behavior, and nervous system.

SURVIVOR FUND

Survivors often encounter significant financial challenges, whether stemming from financial abuse within violent relationships or as a result of taking steps toward safety, such as relocating or transitioning to a single-income household. Assistance with applying for public benefits programs, accessing survivor protections within those programs, and seeking financial aid opportunities are therefore crucial for establishing a stronger financial foundation.

2,162 REQUESTS FOR INFORMATION ABOUT THE SURVIVOR FUND

In 2025, there were 2,162 requests for information about the Survivor Fund across Illinois, a financial assistance program operated by The Network that distributes millions of dollars in housing and cash assistance each year. In recent years, the Hotline has seen a dramatic increase in calls requesting help accessing public benefits and financial assistance programs that coincided with the launch of our Survivor Fund program. To better distinguish which calls were regarding the Survivor Fund and which calls were regarding access to other programs like TANF or SNAP, the Hotline introduced a new iCarol code for the Survivor Fund in August 2025. Data now makes clear that the majority of the growth was related to this program, which outmatched the public benefits need for a place on this top ten list. There were an additional 413 requests for public benefits support across Illinois and 174 requests in Chicago during 2025.²⁷



For details about eligibility and ongoing application cycles visit our website at www.the-network.org/survivor-fund.

TRANSPORTATION

Space at a domestic violence shelter is only of use to a survivor who can make the trip there. Transportation facilitates access to the outside world, be it to our legal system to hold people causing harm accountable, our medical system to treat injuries, work and school to create financial empowerment, or traveling to find a safe place to stay. In 2025, the Hotline received **2,362 requests** for transportation support across Illinois, 903 of which came from Chicago alone.²⁸

This is the first year since the beginning of Measuring Safety publications that transportation has landed on the top ten needs list, though it is not a surprise. Data from other programs, like The Network's Survivor Fund, have long demonstrated that access to transportation is a top need for survivors.²⁹ The growth in awareness of the Hotline's Safe Rides program and participation in The Network's RTA Survivor Transportation Pilot Program may have also driven the increase in transportation requests in the last year.

2,362 REQUESTS FOR TRANSPORTATION SUPPORT

As part of The Network's advocacy priorities to address the intersection of gender based violence and transportation, the Illinois General Assembly included the creation of a free and reduced fare transit program as part of the overall changes to the Regional Transportation Authority which will take effect in the coming years. This promising change came out of the GBV service community's advocacy for more flexible resources, following the successful pilot transportation program.



To read more about that program, you may review a previous publication of Measuring Safety on the RTA Survivor Transportation Pilot Program at: <https://the-network.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/Measuring-Safety-RTA.pdf>

ILLINOIS DOMESTIC VIOLENCE HOTLINE PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS SURVIVOR NEEDS

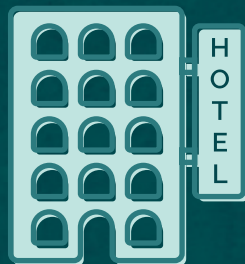
In addition to connecting survivors with service providers to address their needs, the Hotline has continued to expand its own range of services to fill gaps in the current service environment when local funds are available. The following section looks at the outputs of these programs.

CRISIS HOUSING PROGRAM

With Chicago area shelters struggling to meet demand, the Hotline has been able to supplement the number of beds with temporary hotel stays when funding is available. In addition to expanding the pool of available shelter, hotel stays provide more privacy than a typical communal shelter setting, which was and continues to be essential since the COVID pandemic. For large families or survivors with needs that cannot be accommodated by shelter programs, hotel stays ensure access to a safe place to stay. To guarantee that these survivors receive high-quality, wrap-around services while staying at a hotel, the Hotline partners with local domestic violence advocacy programs to connect survivors with services that will address their wide-ranging needs.

In 2025, the Hotline provided hotel stays to 700 survivors, including 338 adults, 280 children, and 82 pets. These families were housed for a cumulative 5,896 days, and the average length of stay for a survivor and their family was 24 days. The crisis housing program covered more than \$900,000 in housing costs, an average of \$3,354 per.³⁰

In 2025, the Hotline provided



700
survivors with
hotel stays



338
ADULTS



280
CHILDREN



82
PETS

SAFE RIDES PROGRAM

The IL DV Hotline also operates the Safe Rides Program, which arranges complimentary Uber Health rides for survivors requiring transportation assistance. Unlike a typical Uber ride, the Uber Health program is a confidential service that allows Victim Information and Referral Advocates (VIRAs) to coordinate rides without sharing the survivor's personally identifying information with the Uber driver. Hotline staff can watch the course of the ride, including pick-ups or drop-offs, and follow up with the survivor to ensure they arrive safely where they need to be. These rides are coordinated to pick up survivors from safe locations, often public areas near their homes, and transport them to a safe place of their choosing. These safe destinations are often domestic violence shelters, the homes of friends or family members, medical care facilities, or other locations not known by the person causing harm.

In 2025, the Illinois Domestic Violence Hotline's Safe Rides program provided 1,934 Uber rides to 2,951 passengers, covering 96,573 miles at a cost of \$181,140.64. Passengers included 2,014 adult survivors, 884 children, and 53 pets, at an average cost of \$51 to travel 27 miles. **The ongoing shelter crisis prompted the program to take survivors further away at a higher cost (65% increase in miles traveled and an 87% increase in program spending) resulting in a 13% decrease in rides provided compared to 2024.** Trips took many survivors out of state, to neighboring communities in Wisconsin, Indiana, Iowa, and Missouri. When the needed travel distance was greatest, the Hotline also coordinated the purchase of 131 non-Uber transportation options like Greyhound bus tickets and airfare to get survivors to safety.³¹

STORIES FROM THE HOTLINE VIRAS IN 2025

Traveling to Safety

"I took a call from a mother with four children who had been treated for injuries related to her abuse at the hospital. She and her kids were about to be discharged, but they did not have a safe place to go. I reviewed all shelters within 2-hours of their location and found that none had room for a family of five. With nowhere to go, we pivoted to safety planning and identified her mother as a safe host for her whole family. The survivor's mom lived more than an hour and a half from the hospital and after reviewing all local transit options, we determined that a Safe Ride was the most direct and cost-effective way to get them all there. Once the details were sorted, the family was discharged and I coordinated a Safe Ride to pick them up from a nearby public library. While they waited for the car to arrive, I stayed on the line and talked through a range of other resources, including legal options and support groups. As the family packed into the car, I reminded them that they were always welcome to call us back if they needed anything further and that we are ready to answer their call 24/7."

In 2024, the Hotline facilitated



2951

RIDES FOR SURVIVORS



2014
ADULTS



884
CHILDREN



53
PETS

AFTER-HOURS ORDER OF PROTECTION PILOT

In the fall of 2023, the IL DV Hotline joined as a program partner for the "After Hours" Order of Protection (OP) Pilot Program, which is a collaboration between the Domestic Violence Division of the Cook County court system and Connections for Abused Women and their Children (CAWC), a gender-based violence (GBV) service provider. During designated hours outside of standard court operations in Cook County, survivors can contact the Hotline to initiate the process of filing an order of protection. If and when CAWC is at capacity and cannot take additional calls, Hotline management staff assist with completing and submitting the order of protection.

Hotline staff screen the survivor for OP eligibility, offer referrals to appropriate services, and provide assistance with safety planning and OP education. If the survivor decides to proceed with filing, they are transferred to an advocate at CAWC to complete the necessary paperwork. This program operates from 9:00pm to 3:00am on weekdays and from 1:00pm to 6:00pm on weekends to assist survivors seeking to file an order of protection.

2025 was the program's second full year of operation and requests to learn about or access the program were among the top ten most common needs in that time.

In 2025, the VIRAs with the after-hours program screened 1,745 callers for OP eligibility. Of those, 1,671 met the qualifications for the program. 1,562 of those were directly referred to CAWC staff and 109 petitions for emergency orders were filed by Hotline staff when referral to an advocate was not an immediate option.³² This suggests ongoing utility of the After-Hours OP program for survivors who may not otherwise be able to access the court system during business hours.

STORIES FROM THE HOTLINE VIRAS IN 2025

Adapting to ICE Threats

"I answered a call from a survivor and her case manager, both of whom spoke Spanish. The survivor needed to obtain an order of protection because her ex was stalking her, sending her threatening messages, and directing unwanted attention towards her and her children. Though she was fearful of him, she was also afraid to go to the courthouse and file for an order of protection because of the potential presence of immigration enforcement officers. She was worried she would be detained. The survivor felt unsafe navigating that process on her own and needed support. I affirmed her feelings and fears, then let her know that due to ICE concerns, the Hotline was supporting the remote filing of OPs through our After Hours program as well as during the day. I coordinated with my supervisor to screen her for order of protection eligibility. Together, we also reviewed a list of legal aid resources and developed a safety plan. At the end of her call, she told me how relieved she was to not have to go to the courthouse while under threat of ICE."

FIREARM SAFETY PLANNING

In the fall of 2023, the Hotline also implemented a new process for firearm safety planning and data collection among contacts experiencing gun violence. Research shows that the presence of a firearm in domestic violence situations increases the risk of homicide 500%.³³ Before introducing this process, there was no routine data collection on the prevalence of gun violence among survivors in the state of Illinois. To gain insight into the scale of this risk, beginning in October 2023, Hotline staff began asking every caller whether they or the person causing harm have access to a firearm. If it is safe to do so, in cases where a firearm is present, additional steps are taken to support the survivor in developing a safety plan tailored to reducing firearm-related death. Starting in August 2025, the firearm question became optional, giving survivors control over when and how they tell their story. Due to this, 2025 totals for callers reporting gun violence are not representative of all contacts. Rather, these responses now represent the percentage of survivors who feel comfortable disclosing the threat of gun violence in their situation.

2025 marks the second full calendar year in which this process has been implemented. In 2025, 1,083 contacts, 1% of all callers across Illinois reported facing the threat of gun violence as part of their experience of abuse.³⁴

STORIES FROM THE HOTLINE VIRAS IN 2025

High Risk, No Resources

"I texted with a survivor who was fearful of her ex retaliating against her for filing an order of protection. She could not afford a lawyer and had struggled to express herself in court, dealing with social anxiety and filing pro se. The judge had denied her an emergency order of protection, instead, continuing the petition and setting a hearing for a two-year order. Her ex had threatened her and owned firearms, leaving her so frightened that she asked us to take down his information in case he harmed her. While we could not do that, we could connect her to legal aid organizations that might represent her at no cost at the hearing. We safety planned at length, including notifying her loved ones of the situation, making police reports about the recent threats, and creating a check-in system with other people in her life. We also talked about other resources. As our exchange ended, the survivor expressed that she was hopeful for the first time in a while."

COMMUNITIES PARTNERING FOR PEACE (CP4P) AND CHICAGO SURVIVORS

Communities Partnering 4 Peace (CP4P) is a collaborative initiative founded in 2017 that brings together victim services organizations and street outreach workers in Chicago communities at high risk of community violence. Initially established by 8 organizations, the program has since expanded to include a network of organizations spanning multiple community areas. **CP4P plays a crucial role in addressing the intersection between community violence and domestic violence, recognizing that these issues are often interconnected and impact individuals and families in profound ways.** Chicago Survivors (CS) is another innovative program operating at this intersection, providing multicultural crime victim services to family members of Chicago homicide victims. These services include a combination of immediate crisis intervention, access to counseling and therapy services, case management, and criminal legal system advocacy.

For several years, the Hotline maintained an informal collaboration with Chicago Survivors. The Illinois Domestic Violence Hotline now has a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with both CP4P (as of 2020) and Chicago Survivors (as of 2023) through which the Hotline provides mutual training, utilization of the Illinois Domestic Violence Hotline, and dispatch services for their Homicide Crisis Intervention. The Hotline assists both CP4P and CS in addressing the needs of shooting and homicide victims' family members whenever domestic violence is part of their victimization through case consultation and referrals, as needed. **In 2025, the Hotline responded to, redistributed, and supported 329 homicide calls and 2,270 shooting and homicide emails.**³⁵

When the Hotline receives email notification of a shooting and or homicide, VIRAs review the notification and send them out to the community agencies or crisis responders that operate within that Chicago Police Department (CPD) district. That agency representative then goes to the scene to see if the victim or family of the victim needs resources. If the victims and or a member of their family calls us for resources, then a VIRA helps to connect them to domestic violence supportive services.

PROGRAM REQUESTS FOR INTERPRETERS

The provision of interpretation services is essential to ensure that language barriers do not prevent survivors from accessing the support and services they need. GBV service providers often face challenges accessing funding for interpretation services or having bilingual staff available to communicate with non-English speaking survivors. A lack of access to interpretation services can delay survivors receiving life-altering support.

To address this issue, survivors or their providers can reach out to the Illinois Domestic Violence Hotline and will be connected with either a bilingual VIRA or an interpreter via the Language Line, to provide interpretation services in over 240 languages. This service enables survivors to effectively communicate with their local providers even if they speak languages other than English, ensuring that language access is not a barrier to receiving support.

In 2025, the Hotline received 357 program requests for interpretation services across Illinois, a 4% increase compared to 2024.^{36*} Requests for interpretation services continue to increase, indicating the critical need for language interpretation services in serving diverse communities affected by gender-based violence. Anecdotally, VIRAs explained this increase with the influx of new migrants to Chicago and the surrounding areas, where there may not be staff capacity to work with non-English speakers at this new frequency.

STORIES FROM THE HOTLINE VIRAS IN 2025

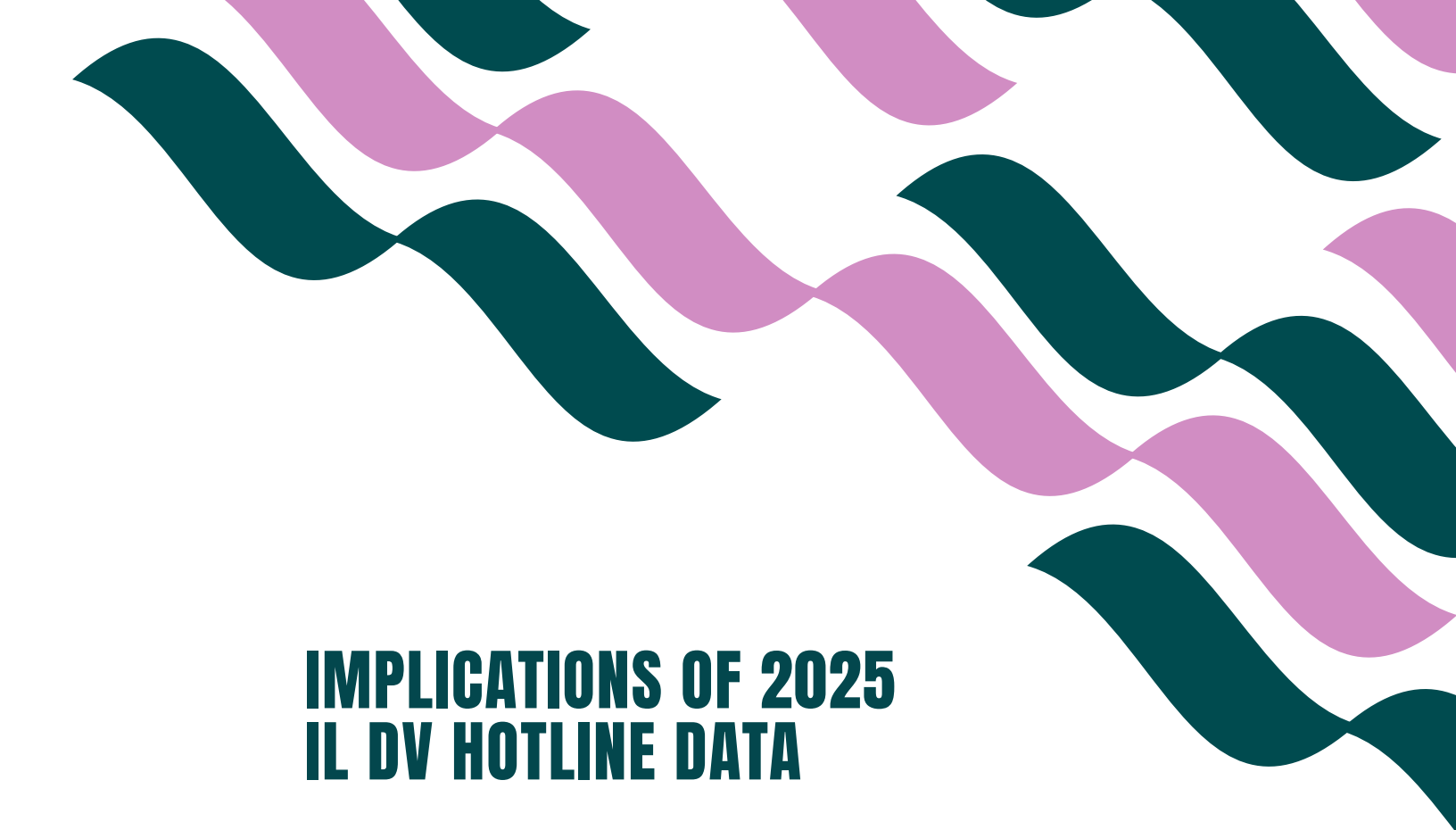
Language Access in Rural Illinois

"I was called by a hospital social worker in a rural community who needed help finding shelter for a survivor who speaks Spanish. Using the Language Line, I conferenced in an interpreter and spoke with the survivor directly to assess the situation. She had been subjected to a physical assault the evening before, she was looking for shelter that would accept her and her two children. The nearest shelter to them was 40 miles away but had room for all three, so I coordinated a warm handoff with that shelter to do an intake. No one at the shelter spoke Spanish, so we maintained a connection with the interpreter to complete the intake and get her family to shelter."

* In 2025, The Network mistakenly published that there were 1,873 requests from programs for interpretation services. This number actually reflected the total number of non-English calls where the type of interpreter (VIRA, Language Line, or Other) was reported. This more expansive number included both program requests for interpreters and calls from survivors directly that needed interpretation. The correct total was instead 342 requests.



Photo by: Dmitriy Ganin



IMPLICATIONS OF 2025 IL DV HOTLINE DATA

Year over year, the Illinois Domestic Violence Hotline demonstrates that it plays a lifesaving role in safeguarding survivors across our state. With contacts from 96 of Illinois' 102 counties, Hotline data underscores that domestic violence is not limited by geographic boundaries and that survivors, wherever they live, are reaching out for support. This report reminds us of the myriad of services that survivors seek as they flee violence and begin their journey towards healing.

It is critical that the Hotline maintain public and private funding for the Hotline's essential services, while ensuring that the safety net for survivors continues to expand.

In 2026, we seek to expand outreach and partnerships in southern Illinois, building on relationships that were founded by previous Hotline staff members, and secure access to crisis housing and Safe Rides services in an effort to empower all those who reach out for help across the state.



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CITATIONS

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