



CITY OF CHICAGO • OFFICE OF THE MAYOR



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

February 14, 2022

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MAYOR LIGHTFOOT JOINS CITY LEADERS AND COMMUNITY ADVOCATES TO SHINE A SPOTLIGHT ON INCREASING RATES OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

CHICAGO – Mayor Lori E. Lightfoot, City and community leaders highlighted the increase in domestic violence-related incidents in Chicago throughout the pandemic and the support and services available to domestic violence survivors. The Mayor has made resources for domestic violence survivors and survivors of other forms of gender-based violence (GBV) a top priority.

The Chicago Police Department (CPD) receives over 230,000 domestic violence-related calls per year. These include violence between intimate partners, roommates, and/or family members. From 2019 to 2020, CPD received a 3.3% increase in calls, whereas the Illinois Domestic Violence Hotline operated by The Network and partially funded by the City's Department of Family and Support Services (DFSS) saw a 16% increase in call volume from 2019 to 2020. In 2021, there were 56% more domestic violence-related non-fatal shootings than in 2020 and 142% more than in 2019. Similarly, 2020 saw 79% more domestic violence-related homicides than in 2019.

"Every person, no matter their circumstances or how they identify, deserves to be respected and feel safe within their own homes," said Mayor Lightfoot. "The unacceptable reality is that this isn't the case for all of our residents, as DFSS, CPD, and the many other City departments and community organizations who see the damage domestic violence has done in our communities can attest to. That's why I'm proud to join other leaders to not only raise awareness about domestic violence but share the progress the City continues to make in addressing its root causes and supporting survivors."

In 2021, Mayor Lightfoot [announced](#) the city's first-ever strategic plan to address gender-based violence and human trafficking, a plan co-designed by community partners, survivors, and City leaders. This plan is supported by \$25 million in new investments as part of the Chicago Recovery Plan. These dollars will be administered by the Department of Family and Support Services (DFSS) to address



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barriers and increase resources for survivors. These supports include \$5 million in emergency financial assistance, roughly 100 additional rapid-rehousing units for survivors fleeing violence, a 2000% increase in funding for legal services for survivors, and new program models to support young people who have experienced or witnessed violence in the home.

The Network discussed the critical importance of these life-saving services and acknowledged that they are available to anyone, regardless of background, education, socioeconomic status, immigration status, or geographic location in the city. Services are free, confidential, and tailored to what the survivor identifies as needing to be safe.

“The Department of Family and Support Services is dedicated to building stability and empowering Chicagoans to thrive, and those goals are much more difficult to achieve when individuals are in crisis or experiencing violence.” Said Brandie Knazze, Commissioner of the Department of Family and Support Services. “The additional resources provided to us in the 2022 budget will expand our capacity to support an individual’s human needs related to financial aid, legal assistance, housing supports and youth services so that survivors of domestic violence and their children can seek safety and a path to empowerment.”

“Advocating Against Domestic Violence commends Mayor Lightfoot for raising awareness of increasing incidents of domestic violence in Chicago, particularly domestic violence-related shootings,” said Amanda Pyron, Executive Director of The Network. “We look forward to working with Mayor Lightfoot and her administration to increase availability and awareness of the services needed to respond to this crisis and ensure Chicago has the strongest safety net in the country for survivors of domestic violence.”

Domestic violence is a public health issue, impacting the overall social determinants of health for survivors and their families. The Chicago Department of Public Health (CDPH) highlighted a new pilot for the City to bring services to people who cause harm regardless of their involvement in the criminal legal system. This pilot is innovative and not available in many places in the country --- most services typically require a court mandate. Metropolitan Family Services (MFS) joined CDPH today to discuss the importance of these services as part of the overall plan to address domestic violence.

"CDPH is invested in Trauma Informed Care principles and sees this initiative as an opportunity to address violence prevention and healing by promoting long-term behavior change in people who cause harm," said Erica B. Davis, Program Director in the Office of Violence Prevention and Behavioral Health with CDPH. "Reducing



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violence will bring us one step closer to a healthier Chicago and we're grateful to all partners and community leaders who are stepping up and joining these efforts."

"Metropolitan Family Services is excited and honored to work in partnership with the Mayor's Office, Chicago Department of Public Health, The Network, Heartland Alliance and many others to address the ever-growing problem of interpersonal violence," said Theresa C. Nihill, Chief Operating Officer at Metropolitan Family Services. "Through an innovative, trauma informed approach we will seek to change the narrative about persons who cause harm in intimate relationships. Our goal will be to address the pain and trauma that has led to this destructive interpersonal violence, all in the context of keeping the victims safe."

February is also Teen Dating Violence Awareness (TDVA) Month. Cristina Rodriguez from the Network's Youth Advisory Board shared their perspective on the issue as well. Starting in 2019, the board promotes awareness of domestic violence and the availability of the DV Hotline to young people ages 13-24. The representative underscored the importance of education for young people and parents alike.

This event highlights the impact of inequity and the violent consequences of forms of oppression intersecting – racism and sexism, for example. Women of color, individuals from immigrant communities, and individuals identifying as LGBTQ+ are disproportionately impacted by domestic violence, but often have less access to resources that can help someone leave a domestic violence situation.

City resources are available for any residents experiencing domestic violence. For support, call or text the Illinois Domestic Violence Hotline at:

Phone: 1.877.863.6338

TTY: 1.877.863.6339

www.Chi.gov/dvhelp

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