



IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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**CITY OF CHICAGO ANNOUNCES EXPANSION OF EMERGENCY FUND
FOR SURVIVORS OF GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE**

CHICAGO — Mayor Brandon Johnson of the City of Chicago and Commissioner Brandie Knazze of the Department of Family and Support Services (DFSS) announce the expansion of the Emergency Fund for Gender Based Violence (GBV) Survivors. Mayor Brandon Johnson allocated an additional \$5 million, from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), as part of the Mayor’s Road to Recovery Plan, to the Emergency Fund for GBV Survivors bringing the total investment to \$10 million. This new investment will enhance the Emergency Fund’s capacity and offer a one-time, unrestricted \$1,000 payment to survivors of domestic and gender-based violence.

Since the start of the pandemic, survivors have experienced disproportionate financial instability and higher rates of violence due to social restrictions, increased contact with abusers, and loss of access to critical resources such as income and housing. Other Crime Victim Compensation (CVC) programs paid for with federal funding and administered by the state of Illinois have stringent eligibility requirements and long payment process times that prevent some survivors from receiving aid according to the Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority (ICJIA). Some of these requirements include notifying law enforcement within 72 hours, not “contributing to their injury” by “provoking the offender,” and not being on probation or parole. In response, Mayor Brandon Johnson invested ARPA funding into the Emergency Fund to fill in the federal and state funding gaps and provide unrestricted cash assistance, with accessible eligibility requirements quickly for food, rental expenses, or shelter for survivors attempting to escape violent domestic situations.

“Our community safety strategy will always center the needs of survivors of violence and trauma and their families,” said **Mayor Brandon Johnson**. “This emergency fund is our way of showing the survivors of domestic (and gender-based) violence that we are prioritizing their well-being, their safety, and their healing.”

Given the success of the Emergency Fund in 2023 and the persisting impact of gender-based and domestic violence, the new investment will be combined with city-based funding to support survivors through December 2026. Starting this fall, the Emergency Fund will be administered by The Network: Advocating Against Domestic Violence, a delegate agency partner of DFSS. It will award a one-time \$1,000 payment to approximately 600 survivors, each month. Survivors must schedule an appointment with an application specialist from The Network to complete the application. For more information about the application process to the Emergency Fund, and to schedule an appointment, please visit [The Network’s Survivor Crisis Fund](#), starting at 10am on the first business day of the month. Appointment slots are available on a first-come basis and will be closed once capacity for the month is met. Applications are then processed and

approved for payment after the appointment. This new process is designed to significantly reduce the wait time for eligible survivors to receive payment. Starting at 10am on the first business day of the month. Appointment slots are available on a first-come basis and will be closed once capacity for the month is met. Applications are then processed and approved for payment after the appointment. This new process is designed to significantly reduce the wait time for eligible survivors to receive payment.

During the initial launch of the Emergency Fund in March of 2023, \$5 million of ARPA funds were allocated to assist 4,600 survivors. Participating GBV survivors received one-time cash assistance of \$1,000 to pay for items critical to improving their safety and well-being. According to self-reported survey data from The Network: Advocating Against Domestic Violence, 65 percent of the survivors spent money on rent, 60 percent on food, and 51 percent on utilities. Significantly, the survey found that 70 percent of the survivors reported improved emotional/mental health and 69 percent reported improved safety.

“DFSS and the City of Chicago are incredibly proud to partner with The Network: Advocating Against Domestic Violence,” said **Brandie Knazze, Commissioner of DFSS**. “The Emergency Fund is a time-tested program that has already proven to make a difference in the lives of GBV survivors at critical times in their lives. This support provides individuals with a little breathing room to help them figure things out.”

GBV survivors’ comments on the impact of the Emergency Fund:

“As a mother and a DV survivor, it is very difficult to make ends meet. The funding I received was like a breath of fresh air, it took some weight off my back. I am extremely appreciative for the assistance.” - Emergency Fund Recipient

“Everything that was offered I took advantage of, especially counseling. I’ve moved, I’m doing so much better and I’m forever grateful. You guys supported me beyond enough and I gladly thank you.” - Emergency Fund Recipient

“The Network is grateful for the leadership and commitment Mayor Johnson has shown in ensuring Chicago has the strongest safety net for survivors in the country,” said Amanda Pyron, Executive Director, The Network: Advocating Against Domestic Violence. “By allocating \$5 million in ARPA funds to the Survivor Fund, he improved safety and wellbeing for the most vulnerable residents in the city. We appreciate the partnership from the Department of Family and Support Services in co-designing an innovative program that meets the needs of survivors in every community.”

For more information about the Emergency Fund, the application process, and to schedule an appointment, please visit [The Network's Survivor Crisis Fund](#). The site will accept applications at 10am on the first business day of each month this fall.

About The Network: Advocating Against Domestic Violence:

The Network is a group of more than 40-member organizations dedicated to improving the lives of those impacted by gender-based violence through education, public policy and advocacy, and connecting community members with direct service providers. They lead collaborative work to imagine and realize radical ways to respond to and end gender-based violence, focusing on the intersection between systemic violence and gender-based violence. For more information, visit www.thenetwork.org.

About Department of Family and Support Services Working with community partners, the Department of Family & Support Services connects Chicago residents and families to resources that build stability, support their well-being, and empower them to thrive.

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