

Amber Cason – Communications Coordinator  
acason@heartlandalliance.org  
C: 217.206.5664  
O: 312.870.4960



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
7/18/2017

NEW REPORT FINDS EQUITABLE ACCESS TO SERVICES, BETTER SUPPORT FOR PROVIDERS, AND ADEQUATE STATE FUNDING IS NEEDED TO ADDRESS DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IN CHICAGO.

Domestic violence is pervasive, dangerous, and impacts individuals and communities throughout our state. It is estimated that more than 2 million Illinoisans have experienced domestic violence in their lifetime. A new report, released today, examines its prevalence in Chicago and what needs to be done to better serve survivors. In *Connecting to Safety and Stability: Domestic Violence Needs Assessment of Chicago*, Heartland Alliance's Social IMPACT Research Center, documents the existing domestic violence response system in Chicago, highlights the gaps that need to be filled, and makes recommendations to strengthen the existing response system and better meet survivors' needs.

The report found that:

- Domestic violence occurs throughout the city, **but there is disparate access to services for survivors**. While national data suggests that women of color experience domestic violence at a higher rate than their white counterparts, available domestic violence services are predominantly located in majority white communities and/or higher-income communities. Locally, the communities with some of the highest rates of domestic crimes have the least physical access to domestic violence services. This means that too many individuals who need to access these critical services cannot get to them or have a much more difficult time doing so.
- The state budget impasse significantly impacted providers that offer services to survivors of domestic violence. Among service providers that primarily serve survivors of domestic violence, 65% reported that **they have limited referral partners** as a result of the state budget impasse, 47% **have tapped into cash reserves**, 41% have had to **reduce staff**, and 35% **have tapped into lines of credit**.
- Survivors use the services that are currently offered by domestic violence service organizations. In 2016, 10,194 survivors received services from Chicago-based providers. **Service providers in Chicago are consistently operating at or over capacity**.
- Additional support is needed for policies and programs that **address the long-term needs of survivors**, including policies that address poverty and economic needs. In 2016, 43.8% of survivors had a monthly income of \$500 or less. In addition to this demonstrated economic need among service recipients, economic abuse is commonly used in domestic violence, contributing to the financial needs of survivors.
- The most consistent unmet need identified by stakeholders **was safe and affordable housing and shelter**. Shelters consistently operate at capacity and there are few options for a survivor who does not want to go to shelter.

- There were 46,301 domestic incidents in 2016, a rate of **1,704 domestic incidents per 100,000 Chicagoans**. And on average, the police responded to 127 incidents and made 23 arrests in response to a domestic incident per day in 2016.

“Domestic Violence occurs in every community area in Chicago. But, not all of our communities are resourced the same, resulting in drastically limited options for survivors in specific communities in our city.” Says Mary O’Brien, Senior Research Associate at Heartland Alliance, “Chicago must address the systemic inequities that exist in the availability and access to domestic violence services. Coming on the heels of the protracted state budget crisis, this report documents the important role service providers play in responding to this pervasive issue and identifies the outstanding needs of survivors.

*Connecting to Safety and Stability* demonstrates that current services are heavily used by survivors of domestic violence. In total, survivors received 149,864 hours of direct services in 2016. From counseling, legal advocacy, life skills, health and wellness, and supports for children, providers offer, quite literally, lifesaving services that are desperately needed. It is imperative that these services receive adequate funding to continue, and expand, the work that they do and the individuals that they reach.

*Connecting to Safety and Stability* recommends various changes to funding, policy, and practice to bolster the domestic violence response in Chicago:

- **Continue to fund** services aimed at meeting the immediate needs of survivors, and **invest in long-term solutions that address barriers to safety and stability**.
- **Support and encourage flexibility** in response and service provisions to allow for the individualization of response to meet the wide range of supports needed to reach safety and stability.
- **Address the systemic inequities** that exist in the availability and access to domestic violence services and support.
- Continually **assess and improve coordinating efforts** among relevant stakeholders in order to ensure a cohesive response to domestic violence.
- Engage in **research** aimed at uncovering the needs and experiences of domestic violence survivors who do not engage with traditional response systems.
- The State of Illinois must **adequately and consistently fund human services**.

*Connecting to Safety and Stability* and additional toolkit resources are available for download at <http://bit.ly/DVACHI17>. All data images are to be credited to The Social IMPACT Research Center. Contact IMPACT for assistance accessing and interpreting data.

###

**Heartland Alliance**, one of the world’s leading anti-poverty organizations, works in communities in the U.S. and abroad to serve people experiencing homelessness, living in poverty, or seeking safety. Heartland Alliance provides a comprehensive array of services in the areas of safety, health, housing, education, economic opportunity.

**Heartland Alliance’s Social IMPACT Research Center** conducts research that helps leaders create change and advance real-world solutions to poverty. Follow IMPACT on twitter at [twitter.com/impactheartland](https://twitter.com/impactheartland). For more info, visit [www.heartlandalliance.org/research/](http://www.heartlandalliance.org/research/)