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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

January 23, 2017

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MAYOR EMANUEL JOINS COMMUNITY TO OPEN APNA GHAR DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SHELTER
New shelter opens in Uptown with specialized outreach for immigrant communities; will expand City's network of domestic violence services and shelter to protect women and children

Mayor Rahm Emanuel today joined Apna Ghar Executive Director Neha Gill, Department of Family and Support Services (DFSS) and members of the community today to celebrate the opening of the Apna Ghar Domestic Violence Shelter. Apna Ghar, which means "Our Home," will now provide space and culturally competent services for another 75 women and children each year, specializing in outreach and advocacy on behalf of all immigrant communities.

This new center builds on earlier investments by the administration, and with another 25 beds, represents a 40 percent increase in shelter bed capacity in the last two years alone.

"Domestic violence victims should never have to hide in the shadows or suffer in silence," said Mayor Emanuel. "The new home to Apna Ghar represents more than a domestic violence shelter or a place to seek refuge; but an opportunity for victims and their families to start a new life with the freedom they deserve."

Apna Ghar, a long-time DFSS delegate agency, provides services and conducts outreach and advocacy to end gender violence, which is disproportionate across immigrant communities, often times due to vulnerabilities around the victim's immigration status making it easier for their abuser to exert control. While Apna Ghar specializes in serving Asian populations, the shelter provides services to any domestic violence victim who comes for assistance.

"For 27 years, Apna Ghar has advocated to end gender violence all together, and by focusing on immigrant communities where we know it is more prevalent," said Apna Ghar Executive Director Neha Gill. "Thanks to the unwavering commitment by Mayor Emanuel and the City of Chicago, we will again be able to grow to reach more women and families with the care that they need to attain the freedom they've been seeking for themselves and for their children."

To support immigrant survivors and to address the systematic barriers uniquely facing these populations, Apna Ghar also provides specialized community education across immigrant communities in an effort to end gender violence. Apna Ghar, which means "Our Home" in Hindi/Urdu, provides long term holistic and culturally competent services to each of the survivors it serves, and last year reached more than 600 residents through its portfolio of shelter and advocacy services.

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“Our community is pleased to see Apna Ghar broaden its reach today to continue their important mission to advocate for victims of domestic violence and to help them in healing so that they can move on,” said 46th Ward Alderman James Cappleman. “No victim should ever feel alone in this, and this new home will ensure that everyone--including our most vulnerable residents--will be empowered to live their lives free from abuse.”

The new home to Apna Ghar follows the opening of WINGS Metro Shelter and Safe House for families 2016, which became the first domestic violence shelter to open in Chicago in more than a decade, and increasing citywide shelter space for victims of domestic violence by more than a third. Since its opening nearly a year ago, WINGS Metro already has housed more than 200 domestic violence victims and their children, including some male and transgendered victims.

Since entering office, Mayor Emanuel has made domestic violence initiatives a top priority, by convening several law enforcement agencies, local government offices, prosecutors, and community service groups to align forces to break the cycle of domestic violence. To date, thousands of police officers across the city have completed an advanced training led by a citywide domestic violence prevention task force, including the Chicago Metropolitan Battered Women’s Network, to both improve supports to victims in response to reports of domestic violence and to increase prosecution rates for these crimes.

Despite the City’s coordinated response to address and prevent domestic violence, the State budget impasse stands to severely impact agencies’ ability to provide much needed services to survivors for their stability and survival. Domestic violence service providers in Chicago—nearly all of which are state-funded—could face an impact as early as this spring if the state budget impasse is not resolved. Statewide funding for domestic violence programming faces a nearly \$20 million shortfall. Locally, threatens service delivery to the estimated 12,000 women and children seeking relief from domestic violence in Chicago each year.

The Mayor encourages every Chicagoan to play a role in actively seeking to end domestic abuse of all types across the city. To report domestic abuse, Chicagoans should call 9-1-1. For more information and support, anyone can call the domestic violence hotline at 877.863.6338.

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